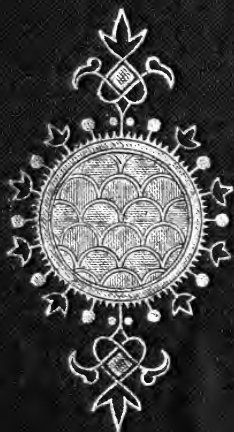
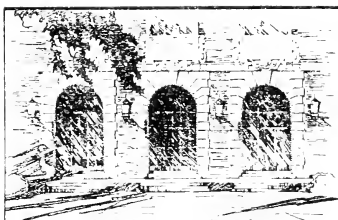


THE WYNDHAM FAMILY



A STORY OF MODERN LIFE



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THE
WYNDHAM FAMILY:

A Story of Modern Life.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "MOUNT ST. LAWRENCE."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

BURNS & OATES, 17, PORTMAN STREET,
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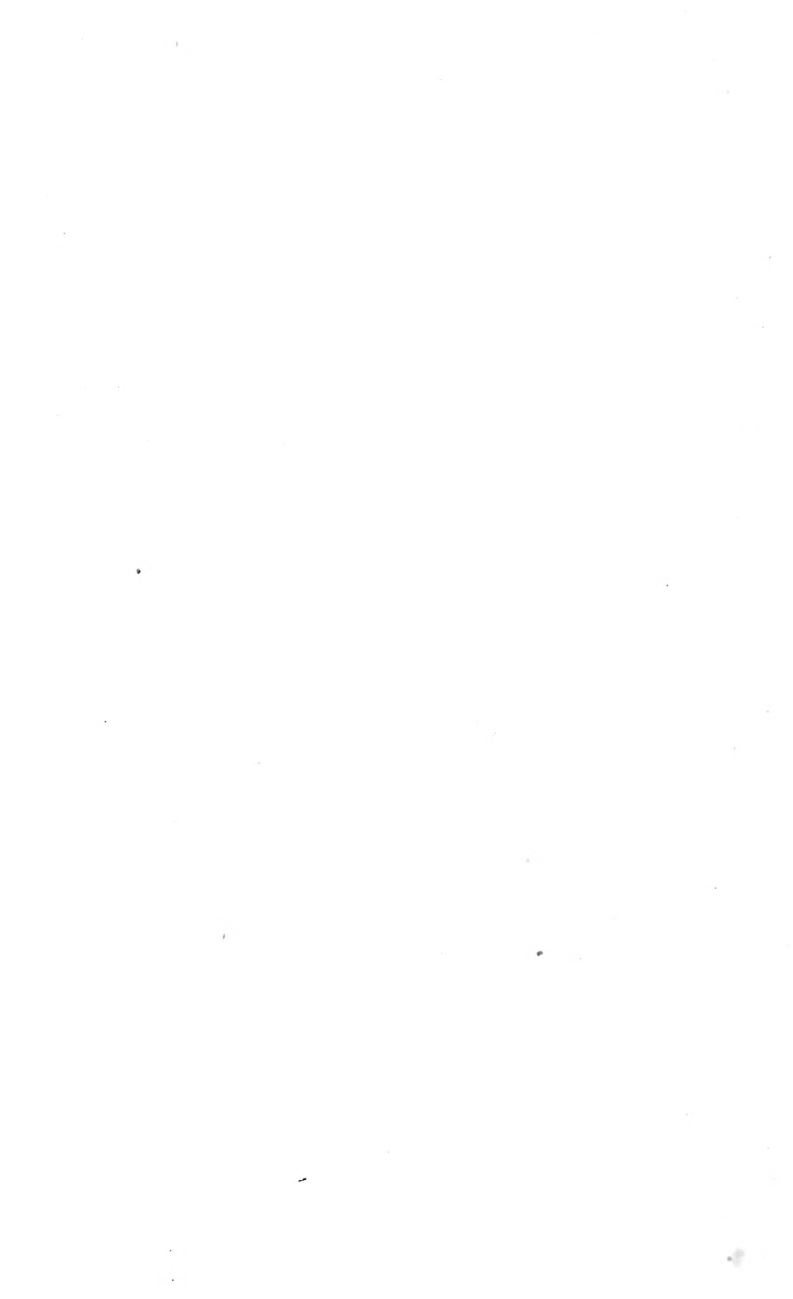
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CHAPTER XXVI.

MISTAKEN CONCLUSIONS.

MRS. WYNDHAM was sitting at her accounts. She was in the habit of paying her house bills monthly, and was forestalling the settling day, because, at the end of the week, her time would be so much occupied by the approaching party. To do Mrs. Wyndham justice, she was punctual in paying butchers, bakers, grocers, coal-merchants, and the like. I will not be so sure that she did not allow dressmakers' and milliners' bills to run on for an indefinite length of time, but then dressmakers and milliners who serve the fashionable world are very accommodating in this respect, and, as it is not easy to credit them with any special generosity, we may suppose that they know how to realize the interest of their money by higher charges, and prefer your not seeing too often what you owe them, lest you should be less disposed to run up a long bill. But Mrs. Wyndham knew that if you leave your house bills unpaid when Christmas comes round, a report is apt to get about that you are in straitened circumstances. She might have paid them regularly at Christmas, it is true, and this would have been sufficient to save reputation; but the sum total would have been so large that Mr. Wyndham would have grumbled terribly; when they were distributed over twelve months, he was not so much alarmed, and in consequence did not grumble so much. As a rule, he *did* grumble always, more or less, when the pay-day came. For this, however, his wife was prepared, and bore it with a cheerfulness which had its reward—in that the matter made less impression on his mind, and he had forgotten all about his annoyance a few hours later.

"Men think much less than women do," was Emma's

sapient remark to her mother that very morning with reference to this subject. "It is better never to explain or justify ; for either they do not listen to half you say, or are so bored that they get cross with you—both, most likely. Men, in fact, think very little."

"They think of other things," said her mother. "Your father thinks of what is going on in the House of Commons, of the Ministry—whether they are likely to stay in or go out—and so forth."

"And to what purpose, I should like to know," retorted Emma. "All his thinking goes for nothing."

"The collective thought of Parliament goes for a great deal ; his goes to form an item."

"Not a bit of it, Mama. Government is a mere scramble for power between parties ; I heard Papa himself say so the other day. If anybody is simple enough to think that Members of Parliament sit there like so many Roman senators, gravely debating, and ready to sacrifice themselves for their country, then, I can only say, they are very simple. Not but that I imagine it was much the same in all times ; only things look grander when they happened centuries ago, because we know so little about them."

"I suppose matters were managed always pretty nearly in the same way," replied Mrs. Wyndham, who was not strong in history.

"Very likely," said Emma ; "because men were always the same. I have the very lowest possible opinion of men."

"That is very odd, my dear Emma," rejoined her mother, "for you do not seem to dislike men so very much when you are dancing and flirting with your partners."

"They are only good to dance and flirt with," replied Emma, who was in special ill-humour with all mankind—or rather, menkind—that morning ; and with this observation she left her mother to her accounts.

; Mrs. Wyndham was herself not in prime good-humour.

A succession of petty vexations had created a sort of raw in the temper, on which any fresh annoyance rubbed very uncomfortably. The bills were high. They were high in detail, and, when added up, they were still higher than the height in detail had led her to expect. She reckoned up her sum again, beginning from the top, in hopes of discovering some error. Then she did not succeed in arriving at quite the same result as when she had added up from the bottom. Weariness was now joined to dissatisfaction, and she began to feel positively savage with all these various tradesmen who were ruthlessly sending in their bills, although they did so by her own express desire. When she had arrived at this stage she sent for Tyrell.

The cook's mild face soon appeared at the door. "What do you make that column come to?" said the mistress, dryly, handing her the book.

Tyrell ran her eye up the page, and replied, "The same as you have entered it, ma'am."

"You did it too quickly for you to be certain. Just add it up again from the top." Tyrell did as she was directed, and arrived at the same result. The sum was correct. "The bills are immense this month," said Mrs. Wyndham.

"There has been a good deal of company," replied Tyrell.

"Now, for instance," continued her mistress, "take the one item of butter: the butter bill is monstrous. I cannot make out how all that was got through; not up-stairs, I am sure."

"There has been the usual quantity consumed in the kitchen," replied the cook, unmoved by the inuendo,—“half a pound each; that is the weekly allowance. But I was going to observe that there was a good deal of confectionery made this month. There were two dinners, and then the cakes and puffs for the refreshment-table at the party. You do not wish me to put lard in the pastry."

"Certainly not."

"And it takes a good deal of butter to make pastry rich."

"But it is not the butter bill only ; every bill is high."

"Nothing is wasted, I can assure you, ma'am."

"I fear this next month will be an expensive one, too. By the bye, I must remind you again about Saturday. M. Pattin will manage the dinner and prepare the *entrées* himself ; but, of course, the vegetables and commoner things will be done by you and Mary ; and pray do look after that girl. She cannot be trusted by herself, and Mr. Wyndham is most particular about this dinner."

"I will pay every attention," said Mrs. Tyrell. "Mary, however, improves a little, but has a good deal still to learn ; and, besides, girls generally require to be looked after."

"But why am I obliged to have a succession of young ignorant girls ?"

"Of course you could have a more experienced and older kitchen-maid, if you preferred that, ma'am ; but then——"

"She would want higher wages, you mean."

"She would expect higher wages, particularly in London."

"But these girls learn their business at last, I take it for granted."

"If they have any ability they do," replied Tyrell, without hazarding any special opinion as regarded Mary.

"And then, as soon as they know something, they ask to have their wages raised, or they leave you," continued Mrs. Wyndham. "It is very ungrateful, very—after you have had them in the rough and trained them." Mrs. Wyndham quite overlooked the fact that the girl, while in the rough, as she called it, had received proportionately low wages ; so that no great debt of gratitude had been running up on either side.

"They hear that others of their own age are getting

higher wages," rejoined Mrs. Tyrell, "and they are, I know, sometimes in too great a hurry to change, which is vexatious ; but they have their bread to make, poor girls, so one cannot blame them much for wishing to better themselves."

"So *you* think," replied Mrs. Wyndham, tartly. "Of course you take the servants' side in the question." Mrs. Wyndham, though she valued Tyrell in a general way, usually got out of patience with her when they had to exchange many words ; for, with all Tyrell's gentleness and the total absence of self-justification, whatever fault might be found with herself personally, there was a kind of mild independence about her when dealing with her employers, of which Mrs. Wyndham was conscious, and which she disliked far more than any ordinary exhibition of temper, or some other common fault. This latent independence of spirit chafed Mrs. Wyndham's pride, which a vulgar defect would not have done.

As usual, Tyrell made no response to her mistress's sharp observation. Perhaps the latter thought she had been a trifle hasty, so proceeded in a pleasanter tone to give directions for some supper on their return from Richmond. "It is such lovely weather that we shall like the evening drive," she said, "and shall perhaps not be at home till half-past ten or even eleven, but the cold meat will do at supper ; so nothing will require to be prepared in the way of a hot dish. I mention this because I have thought it a good opportunity to send you, along with Rachel and Mary, to the play. Roper and Bowles went the other day ; they will attend to us when we are back from Richmond, which will, of course, be before you are at home again."

"I am much obliged to you, ma'am," replied Tyrell, "for your kind thoughts of me, but I must beg you to excuse me. I do not wish to go to the play."

"Nonsense ! You mean, I suppose, that the play does not amuse you."

"I do not wish to go to the play."

"But *I* wish you to go," rejoined Mrs. Wyndham, sharply. "How can I send those two girls by themselves? I know my duty better than that, if you do not. Two girls at that sort of place without a man to take care of them, or a woman of a steady age! Whether or no you like the play, Tyrell, you see you cannot be dispensed with; and I think you might put yourself so far out of the way and go with a good grace, when you see you are wanted—ah! I guess what it is," she said, as a sudden thought struck her; "you do not like going with those you reckon lower servants. You think you demean yourself."

"I had no such thought, ma'am," replied Mrs. Tyrell, earnestly. "God forbid that I should have such a thought, or esteem myself better than any one else! I am ready to go anywhere in Rachel's or Mary's company, but I do not wish to go to the play."

"And pray what is your objection, may I ask? Perhaps you think yourself too good, and condemn others for amusing themselves, and, for what I know, those who send them also? Pray, Mrs. Tyrell, is that your reason? Am I to understand that you think play-going wicked?"

"I blame no one for going to the play," replied Mrs. Tyrell, "but I know that I should myself be doing wrong by going. I made a resolution years ago never to enter the doors of a theatre again. It was some little sacrifice then; I cannot say that it is any now. I should not have said this much, ma'am, had you not required to know my reason for declining your kindness."

"Your reason, rather, for being extremely disobliging. And may I ask what strange thing befell you when you made this vow about theatres?"

"Nothing had befallen me. I was a mere child when I was taken to the play. I did not form the resolution to which I have alluded until some time later. I never made

a vow, but I made such a resolution in the presence of God as I should not be justified in breaking but for some extremely weighty reason."

"And now that I have heard your account," said Mrs. Wyndham, sucking in her lips, a symptom with her of great inward irritation, "I will just tell you what is my opinion on the subject. You think yourself humble because you are not fond of fine dress, and the like, and have a way of talking small about yourself, but there are other ways of being proud, and much more offensive ways, if I am not much mistaken. Did it ever occur to you to suspect yourself of spiritual pride? My notion is that you are full of it, and this is a specimen. Now you know what I have to say on the subject."

"And for what you have said, I owe you the warmest thanks, ma'am," replied Tyrell. "Few will speak as frankly as you have done, and warn others of the dangers which surround them within as well as without. No one needs this caution more than I do."

Mrs. Wyndham looked up a little surprised. The face of Tyrell was not merely calm and unruffled, but it wore an expression of serene joy. Had Mrs. Wyndham seen a cloud of discontent on the brow of her servant, it would have been no more than she would have expected—some exhibition of temper was the natural thing when taxed with so serious a fault as spiritual pride; and, so long as no positive impertinence had been elicited, I rather think that a little commonplace anger would have gone far to reconcile her to the offender. But the speech and the face were alike unintelligible to her, and, being so, excited her displeasure instead of serving to modify it. She had, moreover, an indistinct impression that some assumption of superiority was implied under this show of humility, and this was altogether too much for her to endure from one in Tyrell's position. Accordingly, after bestowing upon her a

fixed and would-be withering look, she said, "I don't believe you," and forthwith began scratching at her accounts and whispering to herself, as if no one was present. Tyrell remained standing where she was, and presently Mrs. Wyndham looked up again. There was still the same joyous serenity on the countenance before her, though perhaps somewhat heightened and a degree more radiant. "I have nothing more to say ; you can go," said the mistress ; and then Tyrell went.

Mrs. Wyndham tried to think she had won a victory and given her cook a good set-down, but, truth to say, she felt much more as if Tyrell had got the better of her, and this made her furious — so far as her *gentility* would permit.

"What is the matter, Mama?" asked Emma, who entered the room a few minutes after the close of the interview just related. "Your face is all in a flame."

"That woman puts me beyond myself."

"What woman? Tyrell, do you mean? I saw her coming up to you."

"Yes, Tyrell"; and then Mrs. Wyndham related the dialogue, not, indeed, wilfully distorting facts, but giving such emphasis to the words spoken by the cook as, in her estimation, were interpretative of the spirit in which they were uttered.

"Set her up, indeed!" said Emma ; "she is too good to go to the play, is she? Well, I am not much surprised ; I always thought she was a stupid bigot."

"And then that look, and the affecting to thank me for taxing her with pride!"

"What was the look like, Mama? I wish I had seen it. I cannot fancy Tyrell getting up an insolent face."

"It was not an insolent face exactly, Emma, though I think it was caused by an insolent feeling ; it was more as if she was up in the skies, and cared nothing for what I

could say, and did not even care to tell me as much. I cannot describe the look."

"How very funny! Gertrude thinks Tyrell is a saint, and this she would say accounted for her strange behaviour."

"If saints are like that," said Mrs. Wyndham, "all I can say is, I do not like a saint, and specially do not wish to have one for my servant. I have a great mind to part with her."

"I do not think I would do that, Mama. You could not well allege as a reason for parting with a servant that she refused to go to the play, and thanked you for telling her of her faults. Besides, it is just in the middle of summer, and not the best time for replacing her. When the season is over, you will have a fair excuse for sending her away quietly, for Papa is always complaining, and wants a more accomplished performer. You could tell her this."

Mrs. Wyndham was always disposed to listen to Emma's advice, and was peculiarly accessible to reasons of a practical order. She accordingly cooled down by degrees, and admitted the justice of her daughter's observations. "But what am I to do about this play, Emma? I suppose I shall have to send Roper with those girls another day."

"She will not go with the lower servants, Mama. I am pretty sure she would not go with Rachel; and I am certain she would scorn to escort Mary."

"What a bother all these servants' etiquettes are! Perfectly ridiculous!"

"I don't know that," said Emma, who was rather in a contentious mood. "They have their little world as we have our big one. I think I should be much of Roper's opinion in her place; I suppose we are all worldly."

"I suppose we are," replied her mother, heaving a sigh, but whether for her own worldliness, or for the dilemma in which she was placed by her servants' etiquettes, I can-

not say. "At any rate, they know nothing about the proposed amusement," she resumed; "so the delay will not matter."

"Oh, but they *do* know," rejoined Emma; "I told Rachel myself. She will be mad; and I dare say lumpy Mary will not like it, but she will submit. Tyrell quite sits upon that girl, Rachel tells me."

"I am sure she would sit upon me, if I saw much of her."

"Only you would kick, Mama, and Mary only grunts, I imagine. But suppose you send these two damsels next week with James to take care of them. They will like him much better as a chaperon, I'll be bound, than that demure Tyrell."

"Send James with them?" said Mrs. Wyndham doubtfully.

"Yes, he would do admirably. I am sure he is a very sober youth. When on duty, at least, he looks propriety personified."

"I will think about it after we come back from Richmond," replied Mrs. Wyndham.

"Oh, that stupid Richmond!" exclaimed Emma; "I wish it was done and over."

"Why, I thought you agreed with me the other day that it was the best thing we could do to occupy and amuse your uncle."

"So it is, I suppose; but it is such a bore going to Richmond,—everything is a bore"; and, with that sweeping judgment on things in general, Emma left her mother to her own reflections.

"I am not surprised," said Mrs. Roper, when her mistress had relieved herself by relating to her maid what had just occurred, while the latter was helping her to put on her bonnet and shawl—Mrs. Wyndham, of course, never did these things for herself—"I am not surprised at all.

I should not have expected Mrs. Tyrell would go to the theater."

"Why not?"

"Law! Ma'am, because she is so queer about them sort of things, and a many more besides."

"What other things is she odd about?"

"Well, ma'am, she has no ideas about the way of behaving in families of any gentility. Would you believe it, ma'am, when first she came, she did not like sojourning"—Mrs. Roper, it may be presumed, meant "adjourning"—"after the hall dinner to the housekeeper's room with Mr. Bowles and myself? She thought it looked proud. My idea is that she was in some second-rate place before she came here, or in some very small one, where there was no housekeeper's room."

"She was living with a family which had resided on the Continent for some time. I have heard that those distinctions of class among servants are not kept up there—not even in the best families," said Mrs. Wyndham with emphasis.

"Very likely, ma'am; of course they do not understand things there as well as we do here."

Emma, as we have seen, was in a humour that day to vote everything a bore; so she refused to drive out in the carriage. She had to practise,—that was her standing excuse at present, whenever she did not like what was proposed to her; Gertrude therefore was her mother's sole companion that afternoon. Emma was, in fact, discontented at hearing and knowing nothing about her lover; and, though clearly he had no prudent means of communicating with her, she felt dissatisfied with him, and out of temper with the whole world in consequence. Meanwhile she did not hurry down to practise. She thought her uncle was in the drawing-room; accordingly, she would wait till he moved down to

the lower floor, which he probably would, unless detained above by the presence of some one to whom he could talk. So she settled her hair and listened for the creaking of Uncle John's boots.

At this moment Rachel made her appearance, with a mysterious air, and her hand under her apron, from which she drew it forth after closing the door. "A letter for you, ma'am;" so saying she handed it to her young mistress. "It was not the Captain who gave it to me," added Rachel, proving by this observation that she very well knew who Emma's correspondent was. "It was left here by a gentleman I don't know; though I think I see him at the party along with the Captain. He rang just after the carriage drove off; so I went to answer the door, James being out."

"What was he like?" asked Emma, with a flushed countenance, her intense eagerness causing her to forget her dignity.

"He had sandy hair, and was not near so well-looking as the Captain; not well-looking at all I should say; middle height and plain dressed, except two or three rings on his fingers, I dare say to show off his white hands, which was the best thing about him."

Then Emma understood that Mr. Jardine was the messenger, and, moreover, that Mr. Jardine knew all about her love-affair with his friend.

Rachel was aware that she must leave her young lady to herself while perusing her letter, so reluctantly departed. The letter, which Emma tore open as soon as she was gone, was short. It ran as follows:—

"My own dearest,

"Believe nothing you hear. I have an enemy—may I not venture to say *we* have an enemy?—in the bosom of your own family, who has calumniated me; but I can

explain all ; only trust me, and be true to me, as I shall be true to you till death.

“ Your devoted

“ FREDERICK.”

“ Oh, yes, I will be true to him ! ” exclaimed Emma. “ I will never credit a word against him ; ” and then she kissed the precious lines. But who was the enemy to their happiness ? On that point there could be no question ; the enemy was her brother Algernon. Emma’s thoughts never adverted for a moment to her uncle. She had not seen the introduction and his extraordinary demeanour on the occasion, and had never connected Captain Baines’s hasty departure with her uncle’s entrance. The enemy who had calumniated her lover was Algernon, of course ; but her Frederick could explain all—explain what ? Oh, about being *fast*—that was the calumny. He was not fast, or not too fast. She would believe nothing to his prejudice, she was more than satisfied with him, but it was evident to her now that her mother’s mind had been poisoned by her treacherous brother. That accounted for the alteration in her manner which she noticed during the late visit. All was as clear as day ; and when she thought of the mischief thus done to her dearest interests, she felt that she should be scarcely able to speak to Algernon when next they met. On the whole, however, the letter had been a source of great relief and pleasure to her, and it completely restored her to good humour. Even the Richmond expedition no longer wore the same oppressive aspect. All was by comparison *couleur de rose*. One thing embarrassed her : how was she to reply, and assure her lover of her fidelity ? There was no date to the letter, and, although she knew the number of his lodgings in Piccadilly, she felt it would be too strong a measure to trust Rachel with a letter for the post bearing Captain Baines’s address. She had reconciled herself to the passive act of receiving

private communications through her attendant, but she recoiled, at present at least, from venturing on any active step with her knowledge and connivance. So the Captain must be content to take things for granted ; he must be aware of the difficulties of her position, and had no reason, therefore, either to complain of her silence or to misinterpret it. Then Emma put the letter in her pocket, and went down-stairs to practise.

She had forgotten all about Uncle John by this time ; however, she found the room vacant, and, placing herself at the pianoforte, ran her fingers over the keys. The window was thrown up, for it was a warm summer's-day ; and what between the outer sounds thus admitted and that which she was extracting from the instrument, she failed to notice a knock at the front door, and the drawing-room door opened before she was aware that any one had entered the house. She recognized at once the step and the hand ; it was her brother ; she looked hastily round, and there was Algernon himself, the enemy to her peace, standing before her. Emma had thought that she would not be able to speak to him, so angry had his conduct made her, but the sight of him modified, not her resentment, but her consequent behaviour when put to the test. The knowledge that we have something to conceal brings down our pride, makes us fearful, and indisposes us to run a tilt against any one. Besides, Algernon's off-hand manners rendered it very difficult to adopt any determined or dignified plan in his regard. He entered on this occasion with his usual careless and engaging smile. He wished to be good-natured, for such was his disposition ; and now that the Baines affair was disposed of, as he believed, he was desirous to do all in his power to oblige his sister, and rub out the recollection of the few uncomfortable words which had passed between them.

"Em," he said, "I have just called to know if you would

like to ride in the Park to-day ; if so, I am at your service. Mustapha will be jumping out of his skin ; he has not been out for a week."

"They exercise him," replied Emma ; "but anyhow, I cannot go out to-day. I have stayed at home to practise."

"All right," said her brother. "You go to Richmond to-morrow, I believe ; should you want me any other day this week, just drop me a line if I do not happen to look in."

"I think I shall be too busy for the rest of this week to ride," replied Emma ; "but do not put yourself out of the way about me, Algernon, for Minny Vincent rides every day, so would chaperon me at any time. This leaves you free."

Emma delivered herself of this speech in a tone not the least like that which was usual to her ; it had a touch of coldness in it, coupled with a certain embarrassment, as if the speaker had hardly decided what manner to assume ; which was the fact. Then Algernon knew very well that Emma had not forgiven him.

"She must get over it as best she may. I have done *my* best and can do no more." Such was his inward remark as, whistling an air from the last new opera, he descended the staircase. The loud closing of the hall-door soon apprized Emma that he was gone. Would she have believed, but a month ago, that she should ever be on such terms with her dearly-loved Algernon ?

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LITTLE WORLD BELOW.

THE weather on the following day was as propitious as could be desired for an excursion, and the party for Richmond drove from the door shortly after twelve o'clock—the plan being a stroll in the Park on arriving, to be followed by an early dinner at the hotel, which Mrs. Wyndham intended to call luncheon, in the futile hope of reducing the probably high charge ; then another stroll, to be succeeded by a cup of tea ; and lastly, return in the dusk to supper at home. Much pleasure was perhaps not expected by any of the Wyndham family from what wore the outward form of a pleasure-party, but it would dispose of a day ; and this was the main object.

The carriage, then, drove off, in a glaring meridian sun ; Emma making loud complaints, from a dread of its effect on her complexion, which was as sensitive to extrinsic causes as was her temper. The hall-door was closed, and the house was left in the possession of the servants, the little world below. It wanted nearly an hour to their dinner-time. Mr. Bowles, the butler, was taking his ease in an arm-chair in the housekeeper's room, and Mrs. Roper, who had just come down from executing the office of equipping her mistress, was fidgeting about in a somewhat *desœuvré* state. "Well, they are off, Mr. Bowles," she said.

"Yes, Mrs. Roper, they are off, and we are left to enjoy what the mistress calls a *banian* day."

"What is that ?" asked the lady's-maid, taking a seat.

"I am not at liberty to say," responded Mr. Bowles ; that being his habitual would-be funny way of expressing ignorance of any matter.

"Law ! Mr. Bowles ; then, why do you use a word you don't understand ?"

"Mrs. Roper, I *do* understand the meaning of the word ; only I cannot tell you its *etymology*. A banian day, I take it, is a day when the system is allowed to repose. I heard Mr. Wyndham say once that it was a day on which sailors had no meat."

"I fancy that is not a sort of rest you would relish much, Mr. Bowles. You like to keep your digestion employed, I suspect."

"Not more than others I could mention, Mrs. Roper ; but our mistress uses the word differently. When she and the young ladies don't go out at nights, she calls it 'a banian day.' You see, with the gentlefolks, amusement is their work. When there is a great many balls and parties in the week they say they have a great deal to do ; so it is a sort of rest of the system when they stay at home an odd day. That, Mrs. Roper, is what learned people call a figure of speech."

"That's beyond me," said the lady's-maid ; "but I rather think my lady meant it was a fast from pleasure when she stayed at home. Dear me ! they never want to rest, ball-goers don't."

"Rest is sweet," observed Mr. Bowles, heaving a sigh. Perhaps no one in the house needed less resting or recruiting than did the butler ; beyond waiting at table, playing valet to his master, who had not half so many wants as had the amiable partner of his life, paying an occasional visit to the wine-cellar, to bring up a fresh bottle, and making believe to busy himself for a portion of the morning in his pantry, Mr. Bowles did little or nothing. Yet, to believe him, no one was more heavily charged with work than himself ; however, as he was in the main a good-natured sort of man, this delusion was tolerated by his fellow-servants, with whom he was rather a favourite. Butlers are grand men,

and think themselves so ; they must therefore be humoured ; and if they are neither drunken, domineering, nor abusive, the rest of the household have good reason to consider themselves in luck, and to condone smaller faults. Mr. Bowles was neither drunken, domineering, nor abusive, so was liked ; specially by Mrs. Roper.

“There is not much good, I am thinking,” remarked that personage, “in having a ‘bunion’ day, or whatever you call it, if no use can be made of it. My lady was quite agreeable to the two girls going to the theater along with Mrs. Tyrell to-night, and then Mrs. Tyrell goes and upsets all by her scruples.” Mrs. Roper, though not personally interested in the projected plan of amusement, was as much put out at its failure as were the two girls, for she had been looking to a snug *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Bowles while they were at the Haymarket.

“Every one has got a right to his or her opinion, I hold,” replied Mr. Bowles, oracularly. “If so be Mrs. Tyrell has scruples, she has a perfect right to enjoy them, say I.”

“Law ! Mr. Bowles, enjoy a scruple ! a pretty sort of enjoyment, particularly when it makes a person so *contraary* and disobliging.”

“If so be a party does not wish to frequent playhouses” —“if so be” was a favourite form of expression with Mr. Bowles—“I cannot see why he or she should be driven there. You, yourself, Mrs. Roper, I will be bound, would not have gone to the Haymarket with Rachel under one wing and Mary under the other.”

That was a poser—Mrs. Roper felt that it was a poser—but she had an answer ready very soon. “No, Mr. Bowles, it is quite true I would not have gone with those two girls, and *my* lady would not have thought of asking me”—there was always a great stress on the “*my*” when Mrs. Roper was dignified, and too dignified she always was to call Mrs. Wyndham by so ordinary an appellation as her mistress—

"but then my objection would have been nothing so paltry as a scruple—it would have been grounded on propriety. Mrs. Tyrell laughs at proprieties."

"In short," said Mr. Bowles, "it comes to this: you would have been too proud, or too high, to be seen in such company—I don't blame you a bit for that; Mrs. Tyrell, she is not too proud, but she has got into her head that the playhouse is the devil's house, I suppose, and so is afraid to go—well, I don't blame her neither;" and Mr. Bowles drew another long, puffy sigh, and asked when the dinner would be ready.

"It wants more than half an hour still," replied his companion; and, not finding Mr. Bowles in a very accessible mood, she took herself off to perform the process called by servants of the second order "cleaning" themselves, but which Mrs. Roper of course styled "dressing." She did not actually dress, however—that is, she did not change her gown at that early hour—she only tidied herself, put on another cap, looked at herself in the glass, washed her hands, and then, descending the first flight, took a second glance at herself in Mrs. Wyndham's cheval glass, a look which was apparently satisfactory, for she smirked a silent approval, and continued her descent to the lower regions.

Mrs. Roper might have been from forty to forty-five years of age, had dark hair, very little touched by grey, good decided black eyes, and rather a sallow complexion, relieved, however, by the colour in her cheeks. People might have supposed she had been handsome when younger, but it was not so; and she was perhaps a better-looking woman now than she had been at twenty-five. She had lived about ten years with the Wyndhams, having previously acted as maid to an old lady, who had died and bequeathed her an annuity of twenty pounds. Mr. Bowles might be fifty, but he had not worn as well as had Mrs. Roper, nor was he nearly as active. Though not a drunken man, he had always indulged

himself a good deal both in the eating and the drinking line, as is not unusual with butlers. He was disposed to corpulency, and, though he did not positively limp, he had that peculiar stiff way of fetching up one leg which points to a former fit of the gout—perhaps he had suffered in this way, but he never owned it. He had lived about two years and a-half in his present situation, having been butler previously in a large house. He had a little *peculium* of his own, besides a pension, to which he occasionally alluded, although he ignored his gout. For Mr. Bowles, in fact, was meditating retirement from service whenever he could meet with a suitable partner—a project which he had also hinted at in not very obscure terms ; and, being thus, as it is called, on his promotion, he naturally wished to make the best of himself. Mrs. Roper thought that he would be no bad *parti* for herself ; for she, too, was getting weary of service, and had visions of keeping a lodging-house at some fashionable watering-place, if only she could realize a sufficient capital to start with, and secure a respectable spouse ; for marriage she reckoned would add dignity and solidity to her position, besides furnishing the needed addition to means. Mr. Bowles had at first seemed not to dislike Mrs. Roper ; whether he thought of her as the possible future Mrs. Bowles, I cannot say. Mrs. Roper did think that he entertained the notion ; but then it must be observed that the butler did *not* like the then cook ; neither did Mrs. Roper. A common dislike is a certain bond of union, and the circumstance naturally threw them a good deal into each other's society, as the other compeer was disagreeable to both of them. So the lady's-maid cultivated her opportunities, and thought she made very satisfactory progress. Then the cook was dismissed, and Tyrell came.

This change at first caused little difference ; she was a stranger, and, though always courteous and gracious, was not talkative. Mrs. Roper complained that she was never

what she called cosy and comfortable. Mr. Bowles grunted, and said nothing. But, after awhile, a visible drawing-off in her supposed suitor could not but strike Mrs. Roper. He began also to take the cook's part in a quiet way, of which we have just seen an instance, and was often to be seen in the kitchen at unusual hours, when there seemed no excuse of business to account for his presence. He would sit by the fire while Tyrell was engaged in her work, and consequently bestowing little attention upon any one but her *aide-de-camp*, Mary, who needed a great deal. On these occasions, Mr. Bowles himself rarely said anything beyond uttering an occasional monosyllable; and, after spending some time in this way, he would take his departure. Mrs. Roper noted all this; and of one thing she was certain: Mr. Bowles took less notice of herself; but could it be possible that the uninteresting Tyrell had supplanted her? She could not bring herself to believe such a thing; and undoubtedly the symptoms of a preference which did not amount to more than I have stated were by no means decisive. Still Mrs. Roper was uncomfortable, and, if she had known all, not without cause. Whether or no Mr. Bowles had ever thought of Mrs. Roper, he *did* think of Mrs. Tyrell. He thought she would make a very comfortable wife; and Mr. Bowles liked to be made comfortable. She was quiet and modest, and had not too much tongue: this was a recommendation, for Mr. Bowles rather liked to prose, and be listened to, himself. She had a good temper, which was nearly everything, he considered, in the matrimonial relation, and then, last but not least, Mr. Bowles had a high respect for her. He was sure she was a very good woman, and this goodness went to complement the merit of good temper in his eyes. I have said "last," but I think there was another incentive: Mr. Bowles was not certain that Tyrell would accept him. This added difficulty and doubt to the enterprise, which often heighten

a liking ; and it added also just so much animation to Mr. Bowles's preference as was compatible with his somewhat heavy nature.

The servants' dinner being now on the table, they all took their places.

"There is something nice under that cover, I will engage," observed Mr. Bowles, as Mrs. Tyrell finished saying grace.

"An Irish stew," replied Mrs. Tyrell. "I think you like Irish stew, Mr. Bowles."

"It is an excellent dish," rejoined Mr. Bowles, "but pretty well excluded from the tables of the gentry now ; when it is banished from the hall too, I think I shall retire into private life."

"With some one to cook it for you, I suppose," said Rachel, with a significant laugh. Rachel had grown very forward since her promotion, and mingled in the conversation of the higher powers in a way which Roper disliked, but tolerated to a certain extent, because she found the girl useful to her.

"With some one to cook it for me, of course," repeated Mr. Bowles, who suspected, but did not at all mind, the allusion. Needless to say, it was wholly lost upon Tyrell. But it was not lost on Roper, who looked very black.

"I must say," she observed, "that I think the dish a very coarse one."

"And grown decidedly vulgar," added Rachel.

"If I had known you disliked Irish stew," said Tyrell, addressing the lady's-maid, "you should have had something else. However, there is the cold beef."

"Thank you, Mrs. Tyrell, I shall do very well," replied Roper ; and she seemed to be doing very well indeed. "I only passed the observation."

"I'll be bound," continued Mr. Bowles, "that you won't

give those epicures on Saturday anything half so good as this savoury stew."

"Dear me! Mr. Bowles," said Roper, "don't you know that Mrs. Tyrell is not reckoned to be competent to send up a dinner to such great judges? We are to have a foreign gentleman in—of the name of Patten, I think my lady said."

"Nor am I competent," said Mrs. Tyrell. "A variety of dishes will, no doubt, be required of which I am ignorant, and which I should not make well enough, even if I had the receipts."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Mr. Bowles, "those French cooks—and some will call themselves so, and are no more French than I am—they turn the place upside down, give themselves no end of airs and graces, and only send to table a few kickshaws that no one cares about; and then look at the bills they run up! I know something about those sort of chaps, don't I? Why, they will waste more in a day than would feed a quiet family for a month. Bless your heart! those fellows think no more of tossing a bottle of port into their soups and sauces than I do of tossing off this glass of beer. And as for trouble, why they give more a great deal than they save. I take it you will find this Patten a regular clog on your proceedings, eh?" and Mr. Bowles laughed at his own witticism.

"The airs and graces we shall have to put up with!" said Mrs. Roper; "for the waste and expense—them that employs them must look to that. As for trouble, we must none of us expect to be saved trouble on Saturday. It will be sharp work. There will be the dressing of the dinner down below, and the dressing the ladies above, and 'such a running upstairs and playing on the fiddle' as never was."

"It will be awful!" said Rachel, who really enjoyed the prospect much.

"I don't think there will be much to fag *you*, Missy,"

said the butler. "You will be stuck up behind the refreshment-table, with nothing to do but to pour out tea, admire the ladies' dresses, and flatter yourself you are admired by the gentlemen."

"Oh! Mr. Bowles; how ill-natured of you to say that!"

"Well, I will put the flattery out, and let the passage run thus—'and be admired by the gentlemen'; does that suit you now?" Very seldom it was that any one was angry with Mr. Bowles, for he never lost his own temper, and there was evidently no malice in his little jokes; so Rachel laughed as well as the rest. "*I have some reason to grumble,*" he continued, "who will be on my legs stumping about till two in the morning at least."

"Remember, Mr. Bowles, we shall be on our legs, too, when we are what you call 'stuck up' behind the refreshment-table," said Rachel; "and standing for a length of time is more tiring than walking about—that it is; isn't it, Mrs. Roper?"

"We shall have enough of both, you may depend, Rachel," replied Roper; "so there's no use talking. My lady has been very kind about it, I must say; for she passed the observation this morning that there would be a good deal to do, and hoped I should not be tired."

"That is very cheap kindness, at all events," said Rachel; "however, I am not going to complain of her, for it is not Mrs. Wyndham's fault that I had not some amusement to-night, to make up for the extra work coming."

"I am very sorry, Rachel," said Mrs. Tyrell, "to have been the cause of disappointment to you and Mary. I am sure I am as sorry as you can be."

Rachel, it will be noted, had never so much as alluded to Mary's share in the loss of pleasure, nor did she now. She shrugged her shoulders, stuck out her lip, and muttered something not very audible, and probably not very agreeable. Mary was next her, and caught what she said.

Raising her face from her plate, with heightened colour and her blue eyes glistening with moisture, she now spoke for the first time since the dinner had begun. "Don't trouble about it, Mrs. Tyrell," said the good-natured girl. "I am sure, as for me, I don't give it a thought; and, indeed, I had not got a cap ready; and I dare say Missis will think of us some other time."

Mrs. Tyrell gave her a sweet look of kindness and affection, as she said, "I am sure she will, Mary; and you deserve it all the more for bearing your disappointment so well."

"If any one imagines that I am dying of the disappointment," said Rachel, "they are quite mistaken."

"We are under no such apprehension," said the butler solemnly. Another laugh went round the table, in which Rachel did not this time join.

"I should care more," said Mary, "if it had been that playhouse—I forget its name—which James was talking about the other day, and where there were a lot of beautiful horses. James see a spangled man fly at full gallop through a blazing drum—that must have been grand—and a pony drink a cup of tea. I should like to see that."

"You might see that sort of thing at any fair," observed Rachel. "As for me, I like genteel comedy or high tragedy."

Here Mr. Bowles interposed.

"Gently, gently, with your sweeping assertions, Rachel,—I am not alluding to your office by using the word 'sweeping,'" he added facetiously—"you might see a spangled man and a tea-drinking pony at a fair, it is true, but not such horsemanship, and, above all, such horses as can be seen at Astley's."

"It is a very low place, though," said Rachel grumpily; "and as for your remark about the sweeping, Mr. Bowles, I never take a broom in my hand now."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Bowles, as if he had never heard that important fact before.

"The company at Astley's is not worth looking at," she continued—"all children, or lower sort of folk; and at half-price the gallery gets unbearable for noise."

"You have been at this low place, then, I conclude," continued her good-humoured tormentor.

"No, Mr. Bowles; I wasn't ever there, but others has described it. I don't know why you go on that way, Mr. Bowles."

"What way? I did not know I was going any way. All I know is that I am going to have a second help of your excellent stew, Mrs. Tyrell."

Rachel had now fairly lost the control of her temper; and, as she could not venture on a fight with the butler, who, she knew besides, was sure to have the best of it, her spite concentrated itself on Tyrell and Mary. She was angry with the latter for making light of the play grievance, and with Tyrell, of course, for the grievance itself. "I should certainly have been glad," she observed, resuming the vexed and vexatious topic, "to see the new play bringing out at the Haymarket, 'The Lover's Leap.' It is quite exciting, I am told."

"That is more in your line, I expect, than the spangled fellow's jump through the drum," said the incorrigible butler.

"Now, don't! Mr. Bowles; you do take me up so."

"Better than setting you down, anyhow, I suppose."

"Law! Mr. Bowles, you are so witty; you'll be the death of us," exclaimed Roper.

"But I was going to say," continued the undaunted Rachel, who was determined to have her bit of gall out, "that it makes all the difference in enjoying oneself, what party one goes with. If the party's not congenial, it is very damping. When I had turned round—to see Mary's

frouzy cap, and Mrs. Tyrell looking as if she wished us at the devil, or thought we was on the high road to him—well, that would have been damping to the spirits.”

“My caps are not frouzy,” exclaimed Mary, whimpering; “no one can say so!”

“Rachel,” said Mrs. Tyrell, with a gravity bordering on severity, “that is not language befitting a Christian woman.”

“You forget yourself, Rachel; indeed you do,” said Mrs. Roper; “it is not proper, behaving in that rude way to Mrs. Tyrell.”

“I do not mind as respects myself,” said the cook. “Rachel is disappointed of an amusement; I am the cause of the disappointment, and can make every allowance for a little temper; but her language was very unbecoming; and, so long as I sit at this table, I beg it may not be repeated.”

“Hear, hear,” said Mr. Bowles emphatically; “I second the motion.”

Rachel felt she had gone too far, and muttered something about having meant no offence to Mrs. Tyrell, nor intended to say anything improper. “I only meant,” she said, “that you can’t enjoy things well if others with you don’t.”

“The sentiment was inoffensive, but much too strongly put,” said Mr. Bowles pompously; “however, as the young woman suggests this amendment, and says she meant no offence, I have no doubt Mrs. Tyrell will at least accord her the benefit of the doubt, and accept the explanation. And now, Mrs. Tyrell, may I without impropriety, and without again mentioning the objectionable personage whose name comes so unsuitably from the lips of the fair sex, and which should never even offend their ears from ours—may I ask if it be true that you thoroughly disapprove of the play and of play-going?”

“I am very reluctant, Mr. Bowles,” replied Tyrell, “to intrude my opinion on subjects of this kind; but, as you

pointedly ask me, I certainly do believe that the theatre—at any rate, such as it is in our day—is a source of evil. I am very far, however, from censuring those who, thinking otherwise, innocently frequent it as an occasional recreation. I could not, and would not, myself go ; that is all I say or wish to say.”

“ Every one has a perfect right to his or her own view,” said the oracular Mr. Bowles. “ And I go further ; if so be any one thinks it wrong to go to the play, I say he or she is respectable, and to be respected, for not going. That is what I call principle carried out in practice ; and if the said individual does not condemn others for differing, who has a right to find fault with him or her ? We can’t all agree on these points, so we may differ amicably and respectfully from each other. Why am I to insist on a party going to the play, if the party has a scruple ? I can go if I like ; that is all that concerns me. If the party had a scruple about cooking my dinner, why, then, I own, the thing would assume a different complexion.”

“ Suppose my lady had made a point of your going to the theatre, Mrs. Tyrell,” asked Roper ; “ would you have gone ? ”

“ No, Mrs. Roper, I could not and should not have gone. It would have grieved me to disoblige my mistress, but her insisting would not have changed my determination.”

“ Not if it had lost you your place ? ”

“ Not if it had lost me my place.”

“ But, then, you must think you know better than my lady ; for she goes very often, and does not consider it at all wrong.”

“ I do not judge her,” replied Mrs. Tyrell ; “ and she cannot judge for me. We shall each of us have to answer for ourselves, and for all we do, say, or think, to our common Master ; but we shall have to answer for ourselves alone, and for others only if God has committed the care

of them to us. Certainly I have no such charge with respect to my mistress's conduct—but I really think we had better change the conversation. I see no good in discussions of this sort."

"Mrs. Tyrell is right," said the oracle of the table; "we have had enough of this topic. I am ready for any other subject that may be started; from politics to—what shall I say?—petticoats."

"Pray give us your opinion on both subjects, Mr. Bowles," said Mrs. Roper.

"Well, in politics, I am a Conservative. As respects petticoats, I am a Liberal; that is, I think petticoats ought to be liberal in quantity, not skimpy, with just a hunch to stick them out at the back. I must, however, except trains. I am not liberal in the matter of trains. Retrenchment there, say I. Trains are my antipathy; and if the women would just ask the men what they think, they would hear but one opinion."

"Yet they add greatly to a noble figure," observed the lady's maid; "and they give an air of height where it is a trifle wanting. See how well Miss Wyndham looks with a train! If Miss Wyndham was just half an inch taller, there would not be a handsomer young lady, nor so handsome a one, in all London. The train just makes her look a thought taller."

"This is Miss Wyndham's third season, I think," said Bowles. "I wonder she has not gone off yet; and so many admirers as they say she has!"

"Gone off!"

"Got married, I mean, of course."

"Miss Wyndham is very particular, I can tell you. It's not every one that can please her," said Roper.

"And then, to be sure, there's papa and mama to please besides," added Bowles; "there's no question of that; and papas and mamas look to the prudent side. 'My

face is my fortune' won't do for them. They are apt to be stony-hearted when means and so forth are short."

"Miss Wyndham will never marry for money, *I* know," said Rachel, with a toss of her head; "she is too romantic for that."

"What do you know about the matter?" said Roper sharply; for her patience with her *aide-de-camp* was not of an unlimited character, and this piece of assumption and self-importance ruffled her very much.

After this the conversation flagged; and Mrs. Roper soon terminated the sitting by asking Mrs. Tyrell if they had not better *sojourn*.

Rachel and Mary were now left alone; Rachel, however, had risen when the upper house had got on its legs, and, while its members were *sojourning*, as Mrs. Roper styled the proceeding, to the housekeeper's room, she slipped into the back kitchen; but Mary followed her. In an ordinary way Mary was gentle and amiable, and could bear a good deal. To this enduring spirit a sluggish nature contributed its share; but she was rather prone to be sulky when offended, and was inclined to resentment. Of this resentment she generally chewed the bitter cud in comparative silence; but there was a point at which she broke down, and then she broke out also, without either measure or discretion. The "frouzy cap" had proved such a point on this occasion. It was not the only offence received, but it was the crowning offence. "You are the most ill-natured girl I know," said the angry and excited kitchen-maid. "You think of nothing but yourself, and care for nothing but yourself."

"Tol-de-rol! what is all this about?" replied Rachel.

"You know very well, you do. Don't tell me."

"I am not going to tell anything; I really cannot guess what you are in all this taking about, unless I have affronted you about your cap. What a simpleton you are!"

"You just said it to vex me, you jade ; for you know very well there is not a word of truth in it."

"Oh, I am a jade, am I ? Shall I tell you what *you* are, Mary ?—a trollopy sloven ; I am not going to eat my words—I can tell you that at any rate. You *do* wear frouzy caps—frouzy caps, very frouzy caps—there you have it." A pause ensued, prognostic of a coming storm ; then Mary, drawing herself up to her full height, which was not very imposing, said, "If my caps are not *quite* so smart as yours, Rachel, there is a very good reason for that."

"You mean my wages is higher. Of course they are higher."

"And if I do not wear such smart caps," continued Mary, "at least I can show a good face under what I do wear, and look all the world in the face, too, without shame."

"I dare say you can," said Rachel, carelessly, pretending to scrutinize some of the crockery ; "I never said a word against your character."

"No one can say that I have anything to conceal—like some people."

This was uttered too pointedly to be passed over. "What do you mean, girl ? Who has anything to conceal ?"

"*You*, Rachel ; I should not have said it, but you have forced it out of me."

Rachel affected to be taken with a fit of laughing. "Why the girl is gone crazy, I believe."

"I am not crazy, and people thinks me stupider than I am, and that I have no eyes or ears. If some persons can find money for smart dresses, maybe it is because they have smart friends. When people stops to talk to fine gentlemen in the street, and carries letters for them, maybe they gets paid for it."

"You lie !" exclaimed Rachel, with her face in a blaze.

"I see you with these two eyes ; and I know who the

gentleman was, for I see him at the party, and I heerd what he said to you then, too. Do you think I have no ears? Didn't he say you were the prettiest girl there, all but your young mistress? and you answering him so jaunty and familiar! I knows the gentleman, and all about him, for I have heerd James say that, when they are a-driving in the Park, and Captain Baines riding a fine horse, he will lean one hand on the carriage-door and stoop over, talking ever so long to Miss Wyndham, and looking so sweet all the while. This is all romance, I suppose?"

Rachel could bear this no longer, and, having no reply to make, she seized a scrubbing-brush which lay near at hand and flung it at her persecutor. Mary, however, contrived to dodge the missile, and ran away. Henceforth there was enmity between Rachel Somers and Mary Tidman, but the subject-matter of the quarrel did not find its way to the surface again, and no further allusion was made either to frouzy caps or stolen interviews.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

TO RICHMOND AND BACK.

Most persons, I presume, have heard of the King of France who marched up a hill with twenty thousand men, and then marched down again. The expedition of the Wyndham family to Richmond was something similar, as respected apparent object or result. They went and they returned. Mr. and Mrs. Wyndham, with John Sanders, occupied the interior of the barouche; the two girls were behind, in the rumble; and James, that pink of propriety, was on the box with the coachman. Emma's great grievance was the sun;

she was complaining of it at starting, and, when she alighted at the door of the Star and Garter, she was still complaining. From her querulous tone one might have supposed that something or some one was to blame in the matter ; either the sun for shining, or those who took her for exposing her to it. At last her father said, " You had better not have come, Emma ; if you do not like the sun, you must keep out of it."

" It is just the worst time of day, Papa, you see. Earlier or later is very well. It is so disagreeable between twelve and two."

" We have all managed to get through it," said her father, who was always annoyed by complaints ; " and I hear no one making a fuss about it except yourself. There is Gertrude taking it quite coolly."

" And so should I, if I did not feel the sun more than she does. She is paler than I am, and so you might think her skin was more delicate, but it is quite insensible to the sun. I suffer frightfully ; no one knows what I suffer."

" I think you take pretty good care to let people know, Emma, so far as you can," said the hard-hearted papa. " And now, who has a mind for a stroll ? I am not come to Richmond to be boxed up in this room doing nothing. Have you ordered dinner, Beatrice ?"

" Yes, I ordered it before I came upstairs ; but pray, Percy, do not call it dinner before the waiter."

" My dear, what difference can it make ? I hope it is a dinner."

" Well, I think there is what you will like. One plain and two made dishes ; soup, of course. You do not want fish, do you ? It adds so."

" Not particularly, if Sanders does not care."

" I know he does not care ; he says he gets enough of that on fasting or abstinence days. And there will be something sweet."

"Hang the sweets!"

"But the girls like them."

"All right! I do not grudge them their sweets, and I never wish to do things stingily at this sort of place, Beatrice; so let us call a dinner a dinner, and leave the bill to take its chance. But who is for a walk?"

"I will go, Papa," said Gertrude."

"My head aches so with the glare," said Emma.

"Lie down on that sofa, my love," said her mother. "I like the arm-chair myself, and do not want it."

"O Mama, that is one of those odious crooked lounges, as they call them, on which no one can lie flat. I will go up to a bedroom, I think, till dinner-time, and keep quiet there."

So Emma went upstairs. Her headache was almost fictitious, but it did not amuse her to go out walking; and she wished to be alone, to think of her love.

"John, you may as well stay and keep me company." This invitation was addressed to Sanders by his sister. He had been standing at the door of the hotel watching some arrivals, and had only just entered the sitting-room. "You will have plenty of time for rambling in the park later."

Mrs. Wyndham would willingly have dispensed with her brother's society, but she had an object in detaining him. She had hitherto never seen him by himself, except for short scraps of time, when interruption might occur any moment; and she felt that she ought to say something about his or her near relations. This, however, was a topic which she did not like introducing before her husband and children. It is true that they knew well that her relatives belonged to an inferior class to that in which they moved, and Percy Wyndham had never shown either disregard or contempt for his connections when circumstances—chiefly in his early married life before the death of his father-in-law

—had brought him in contact with them. Had Mrs. Wyndham desired to see more of any of the members of her family, her husband would have readily gratified her ; but, as the indulgence would have yielded her no gratification, she never put his kindness to the test. As for her children, they knew they had all these aunts, uncles, and cousins, but, until one was brought on the scene in the person of John Sanders, they had seldom bestowed a thought upon them. Still, Mrs. Wyndham did not love talking of her family ; she wished to forget them, and was very glad they should forget her. Specially she did not desire to bring forward the subject with her brother while others were present, for he was sure to blunder on, or blurt out something which would mortify her exceedingly. So the present occasion offered a good opportunity. She did not begin at once, that he might not suspect her motive. John had a sharp eye, and she knew it.

“So you dine to-morrow at Madame d’Héricourt’s,” she said. “She is an excellent person, though a little strait-laced.”

“I liked her very much indeed. I did not find her at all stiff.”

“Not stiff exactly in manners ; I meant that her ideas are a little narrow and antiquated.”

“Well, I liked her ideas. We interchanged some.”

“Indeed ! in that short visit ? I never could find much to talk to her about. Perhaps she does not fancy me ; and I only hope that it may not operate to Algernon’s disadvantage. What did you think of the girls ?”

“I thought them pretty and unaffected. The eldest is a very fine-looking young woman, with nice modest manners. To the youngest I took uncommonly ; she is such a gay and frolicsome child ; but I saw very little of them ; they were called off for a drawing-lesson.”

“Emma says Pauline is very childish for her age ; but

they are both of them kept so backward that it is not surprising."

"I should not say the little one was backward ; many people would say she was forward ; but I like saucy little things myself—when it is all nature, I mean."

"Backward, I mean, as respects society and conversation. Mind, Pauline is getting on to seventeen, and she can talk about little except her kitten. But neither of the girls has any conversation in company. Anne, however, is very sensible and intelligent ; at least so I am told"—and Mrs. Wyndham simpered.

Then there was a pause ; she thought that her brother would perhaps say something about Algernon's attachment ; but no, John said nothing about it, and did not seem even to desire to say any more about Anne d'Héricourt, for he immediately changed the subject. His remark, however, was of a kind to facilitate the introduction of a reference to the Sanders family. "I have been thinking over my plans, Beatrice," he said ; "and I find I must leave you on Thursday week."

"So soon !" said his sister. "You spoke of a fortnight."

"About a fortnight, I said ; this will be only one day short of the time, which perhaps I may make up by just dropping in about two months later on my way back ; that is, if you have not migrated and gone into *villeggiatura*."

"Of course you will come to us," replied Mrs. Wyndham, rendered for the moment quite hospitable by the agreeable surprise of finding that her brother's stay was not to be lengthened to the extent she had feared. "We shall probably remain in town until the end of August ; certainly until Parliament is up ; and then we shall go for a couple of months to the sea-side. I suppose you go straight into Warwickshire now ?"

"Yes, to Compton Paddocks."

"David and Sarah go on in the old house still, of course?"

"O, yes, they'll never budge from there. Have not you heard from them lately?"

"Not *very* lately. I know I am a bad correspondent, and when one meets so seldom, there is so little to say. But I shall like to hear your account of everybody and everything; and you must give my love, of course."

"I take it there is nothing to give any account about Comptonville, I expect, is just what it was. I don't suppose there has been a dab of paint applied to door or window, or an old carpet replaced, since father's death."

"And my father was so particular about the furniture."

"Yes, but David cares for nothing but his pigs. He keeps them at the back, where he has built a sort of yard; but you must have seen that improvement, as David would call it."

"No, I have not."

"You can hear the pigs grunt from the dining-room, and smell them, too, when the window is open; but that is not often. My eyes and wig! how they do *froust* at Comptonville."

"How very unpleasant! I do not think I could bear it."

"Your fastidious, fashionable nose would almost turn up, I fancy. I do not like it myself, though I am not fastidious, and certainly not fashionable, for I live on fresh air, but I must put up with it while I am there; and I shall be mostly out of doors."

"What does Sarah do?"

"Well, I do not know more than yourself. I expect to find her looking thirteen years older, and knitting stockings just as when I left her. She has a few cronies, I believe, in the village, and the buggy and the old horse take her and David the two miles to Mass on Sundays."

"It is a dull existence."

"Not much stir in it, but *they* don't find it dull. I must stay about three weeks at Compton any way, and shall make it out somehow, I have no doubt."

"And then?"

"And then I go north. First to Edinburgh, where I have business with my agent, which will keep me a few days; and then I shall treat myself to a short Highland tour. I may go to Glasgow; but my business would not oblige me."

"Then why go?"

"O, to see Michael, of course. You know he lives there."

"I was not sure that he had not moved lately," replied Mrs. Wyndham. This was an evasion, for she knew very well that her brother Michael lived at Glasgow, but at that moment he had quite slipped out of her memory.

"Bless your heart! he never thought of moving. He carries on old Horniman's trade now."

"Old who?"

"Old Horniman, his father-in-law; you had forgotten his name, had you?" The lady, in fact, knew nothing about old Horniman. She knew that her brother Michael had been put into some situation in a house of business in the cotton line years before, and had an indistinct recollection of having heard that he had married, but she had never made any particular inquiries about his belongings. "He was fortunate in worldly matters,—Mike was," continued Sanders, "marrying that fat hosier's daughter."

"He was an actual hosier, was he?" said Mrs. Wyndham.

"Yes, he was an actual hosier," replied her brother John; "sold stockings, and had stockings hanging up in his window; and now brother Mike has them hanging up in *his* window, for the window is his now. The fair Helen was the only child; so he owns the shop since old Horniman died, and he will be very happy and proud, no doubt, to supply

you all with hosiery, if you will send him an order." Mrs. Wyndham shuddered inwardly at the idea, and felicitated herself on the fact that Glasgow was a long way off. "'Sanders, late Horniman,' figures over the shop front," pursued the relentless brother, who, I suspect, felt a little mischievous pleasure in these distasteful details—"and a very good business he carries on; but, Lord bless you! I would not be in Mike's shoes, or stockings either."

"I dare say not; your own business is quite another thing."

"I did not mean that; hosiery is a very good business in its way, but I mean I would not take his responsibilities. He married a Protestant, you see; that was his first mistake, if it was not a fault; and then, I suspect, he must have strangely neglected his duty about the children. The daughters—there are three girls—go with their mother out and out, and the two boys, as fine young fellows, I'm told, as you would wish to see, go with nothing at all, so far as I can gather from Mike."

"That is very sad; and what does Michael do?"

"Ah! that is just it. He is one of your nominal Catholics. I suppose he goes to Mass on Sundays, when it suits him, but as for duties, they have been in arrears, I very much suspect, for many a long day. What can you expect from a brood reared in that manner? Before I knew all this, I had it in my mind to take one of those young chaps over with me, and see what I could make of him in the wine trade. I knew his father was casting about where to place the eldest, but I thought I would just have a look at the lads, before I gave a hint of my thoughts; for, you see, it is a different thing taking a nephew into one's business from taking a stranger. If he cannot be like something of a son to you, he may be a proper nuisance; and you are not, or, at least, you don't feel, so free to give him the sack."

"In short, you were thinking of adopting one of these boys?" said his sister, to whom the subject was becoming one of no small interest.

"Not precisely that, and nothing in a hurry, anyhow; however, all that's at an end in my mind since the letter I had from David the other day. David is all sound on those matters—his religion, I mean, and so forth, and he is not given to exaggerate. I can trust his report. Besides, I wrote to Mike myself after that, and told him what I heard. His answer was unsatisfactory; and he did not seem to wish to be bothered. His boys, he said, were not Protestants. He could not say they attended well to their religion—I had asked the question—but they were very good sons to him, so he had no cause to complain, and was sure it was best to leave them to themselves. If worried on the subject, they would perhaps give up entirely and go to the Protestant church. And so I am almost doubting now whether I will go to Glasgow at all. I am afraid things are past mending there by anything I could say; and Mike clearly would not like my saying anything at all. Nothing would take me among them but the hope of doing good; otherwise, I'd keep a hundred miles off. If there's one thing in the world goes against me, it's a bad Catholic."

Then Mrs. Wyndham felt sure that her brother was looking up his nephews, as she had suspected, with a view to future pecuniary arrangements.

After a slight pause, John said, "And our Australians—do you ever hear from them?"

"I have not heard for a long time," replied his sister. "I forget which wrote last, Lucy or myself. It dropped off—the correspondence, I mean. One hardly knows what to write about to such distant relations."

"Relations at such a distance, you mean, I suppose," replied John. "A sister is hardly a distant relation."

"But what could I write that could interest her, our lives

being so different?" pleaded Mrs. Wyndham, in rather an apologetic tone.

"I should have thought every little thing would interest relations at the other side of the globe; at least, I go on that plan."

"Poor thing!" said his sister, "she has had to rough it, I fear. Her early letters were full of their distresses and difficulties, which pained me very much, for I was quite unable to give any substantial assistance. I hope they are doing well now."

"Assistance!" almost shouted John. "Hope they are doing well! I suppose they *are*, indeed. Why, the Jacksons are among the chief people of Melbourne! Jackson is in Parliament, and thinks himself, I'll be bound, as great a man as Percy, any day; indeed, I doubt whether Wyndham has a tithe of the weight in our Imperial Parliament which honest Ben Jackson has in the Melbourne House of Commons. And then they have some thousand head of sheep and cattle. Substantial assistance, indeed! Why, I think Lucy would be amused at that idea, seeing that she is one of the biggest squatteresses in the colony. I suppose they could buy us up all round."

"I am very glad to hear so good an account. Do you think they will return now they have made their fortune?"

"Not they. They are great people there, and would be small people here."

"Then they do well to stay where they are," rejoined his sister; and she cordially meant what she said, on her own account as much as theirs. "I think I must write to Lucy," she added, "and felicitate her; that is, if you think she would care to hear."

"A letter from the old country is always welcome," said Sanders.

"And you must give me her address, and tell me how many children there are."

"O, she will tell you herself. There are eight or ten, I think—plenty on 'em, I know. Jack's the eldest, and Tom next. Maria is married to a coal merchant, and lives in Melbourne; the rest you must find out." So saying, Sanders scratched down the address of their squatter brethren. And after this there was no more family talk; each fell to musing. What Sanders was thinking of I cannot say, but I believe his sister was wondering whether he would consider Algernon a good enough Catholic to favour with some "substantial assistance" towards enabling him to marry.

After a while the walkers came in, Emma came down, and the dinner came up. Nothing very remarkable was said or done. Mr. Wyndham did not like the soup, his wife expressed orrow, but was inwardly rather glad, as this dissatisfaction might tend to reconcile him to home fare. Mr. Sanders observed that the boy helping to wait was a smart lad, upon which Emma said to her mother that she so wished they had a page. "Now, when we are away, Mama, and have taken James, it does look so bad and lodging-house-like for a woman to be answering the door; and there are a great many cards being left just now. Bowles never goes to the door by any chance."

"Nothing could induce me to keep a 'buttons,' said her father. "There are no more troublesome animals in the world; they break more than the amount of their wages, eat as much as two, prig the sugar when they can, and are generally as impudent as the deuce. Besides, I cannot afford to keep another servant. If I kept another it should be a woman. Our men-servants, lazy fellows, have next to nothing to do as it is."

"O, Percy!" exclaimed his better-half, in a remonstrating and dissenting tone. Mrs. Wyndham was much more tender about giving trouble to the men-servants than to the maids—a by no means uncommon case.

"I am quite of your opinion, Wyndham," said his brother-in-law; "and I go so far as to say that men have no business in the house; domestic work for the females, and out-of-door work for the men; the stables and the garden are their province. If I had fifty thousand a year, instead of less than as many hundreds, I never would have a flunkey or a butler."

"The flunkey I could spare, perhaps," said Wyndham, "but the butler is a necessity."

"Why can't a woman," said Sanders, "make fully as good a butler, if put in the way of looking after the cellar? Of course she can, and is less likely to drink the wine. Besides, a man may be his own butler without any great labour."

"That I certainly cannot be," replied the brother-in-law.

"The footman is just as much a necessity as the butler," added Mrs. Wyndham. "Who is to go with the carriage, or walk after us when we go out?"

"The man who goes with the carriage need not be in the house," replied her brother, "nor the flunkey who saunters after you in the street, if you must have such an article dogging your heels; but I should keep the inside of the house clear of such fellows if I were ever so rich. The men-servants find nothing to do within doors except make love to the maids or quarrel with them—generally both."

"There's some truth in that," replied Wyndham, laughing; "but we must take the world as we find it."

No further topic of much interest was started. The whole party went out in the evening to admire the view from the terrace and take a stroll in the park; then they came in, and there was the concluding cup of tea, and the paying of the bill, and the pleasant fresh drive home. On the whole, Sanders enjoyed himself very well. He could always find amusement in his quiet, simple way; so the chief object of the expedition might be said to be attained.

The party returned to find a cheerful, well-lighted room, with the supper laid out ; and all, Emma included, were in good humour. Supper is proverbially a cheerful meal ; much more so than dinner. Perhaps the want of formality and absence of the flunkeys may rank among the reasons for this acknowledged fact.

"Going to bed already, Sanders !" said Wyndham, who was in an unusually gay and sociable humour for him. This observation had been provoked by John Sanders pushing back his chair and lighting his flat candle.

"Not thinking of it. I had forgotten something ;" and Sanders *had* forgotten something ; it had escaped his memory for two or three days. Perhaps the reader may recollect that, when he took his walk with Gertrude on the Saturday, he spent some time in a jeweller's shop, desiring his niece to look about her while he transacted his business. The good-natured uncle was, in fact, engaged in choosing a present for each of the two girls. On his return, the affair of Captain Baines immediately occurred, and that put the events of the morning out of his head. The presents were in the pocket of a coat which he had not since worn, so that nothing revived the memory of the agreeable surprise which he had prepared for his nieces. He suddenly remembered it, however, while they were all sitting at supper, and this was the cause of his abruptly leaving the social board. He soon reappeared, put out his candle, and approached a small table at the end of the room ; no one noticed what he was about until he called out to his two nieces, "You must come, girls, and take your chance of what I have in my two hands." (His hands were behind his back.) "Right or left ? Emma, you are the eldest, so you must speak."

"But I don't know what you mean."

"Never mind ; you can say, 'Right' or 'Left,' cannot you ?"

"Yes," said Emma, "of course I can say that, if you wish me : 'Right or left.'"

"That won't do, Miss Pert ; you must say either 'Right' or 'Left' ; only the one word."

"Well, 'Right' ; I always like to be right."

"And not left. I thought not," said the uncle. That would not suit you, my girl, would it ? Come, Emma, you have got the butterfly. I somehow thought you would get the butterfly." And Sanders, opening a small card-box, produced a pretty brooch in the form of that volatile insect, the wings adorned with emeralds and rubies, and presented it to his eldest niece. "You, Gertrude, must accept what remains ;" and he gave her the other brooch, which was equally pretty, but in the form of a Maltese cross.

Emma was standing with her present in her hand, scarcely knowing what to say—never, perhaps, had a present yielded her less pleasure ; but Gertrude, exclaiming, "Oh, how pretty, and how kind of you, uncle !" threw her arms round his neck with a spontaneous outbreak of affectionate gratitude. Emma could not bring herself to imitate her sister, but she now expressed herself also as highly delighted and very much obliged, and hastened to show the butterfly to her mother, a proceeding which seemed to relieve her from the embarrassment of her position and veil the contrast between her behaviour and that of her sister. Mrs. Wyndham added her warmest thanks, and admired the beauty and good taste of the brooches. Papa also endorsed the praise, which was deserved ; and every one parted for the night with smiles and apparent satisfaction.

But one there was who was far from being satisfied. Gertrude was lingering over a book of devotion, and had shaded her candle from her sister's bed, believing Emma to have already dropped asleep, when she heard something very like a sob from under the bed-clothes. "I fear I am

keeping you awake, dear," she whispered, approaching Emma's bed ; "I will put out my light."

"It is not that," said Emma, throwing back the sheet, in which her face had been partially buried, and sitting up. Her colour was heightened, and there was a tear on her cheek ; it was a tear of vexation. "Oh, I wish he had never given it me ! I do so dislike it."

"What ! the butterfly ?"

"Not the thing itself ; it is very pretty ; but I so dislike a present from *him*. I cannot bear him, and am always saying so, and always laughing at him, and always quizzing him."

"Then you must do so no more now."

"But it is my only consolation for the intense bore and annoyance he is to me. O Gertrude, you do not understand these things. You do not understand how odious it is to have anything given to you by a person you dislike as much as I do him !"

"It is very nasty of you, Emma, to say that," exclaimed Gertrude, with an indignation unusual to her.

"You are unjust, Gertrude," replied her sister. "You might call me nasty if I felt no annoyance at all, took my present, and ridiculed the giver behind his back just as comfortably as before. If I was the unfeeling creature you think me, I should do this. It is because I *have* some feeling that I am vexed ; and this you call nasty."

"Forgive me, dearest Emma," replied Gertrude, kissing her. "It was very wrong and unkind of me to use such a word ; but I did not mean to be unkind, and I am sure you are not unfeeling. I was myself vexed, because I am persuaded that you wrong my uncle by thinking as you do of him. He is kindness itself. I have seen more of him than you have, and, though I must own he has not much polish, he has, what is much better, an excellent heart. And, besides, there is no vulgarity of mind in him, I can

assure you ; his sentiments are all so good, so true, so upright."

"I think no ill of him," replied Emma ; "but I have for him what is, to me, far more difficult to conquer than would be any dislike which came from disapprobation, or which might proceed even from resentment for an injury. I have a repugnance, a distaste for him. He excites in me a disgust I cannot express."

"But that is so unreasonable."

"It may be so ; but on that very account it is impossible to argue with it. You cannot reason against disgust ; it is a matter of feeling. You cannot fairly judge me, Gertrude, for you have no such temptations."

"And I do not judge you, dearest ; but I think we ought to resist such feelings if we have them, because they make us unloving and uncharitable. I am sure you know this yourself, because you say it vexes you that you cannot go on comfortably indulging your dislike in the way you did before, now that he has shown you a kindness. Does not that prove to you, dear Emma, that to entertain such feelings towards people is not charitable ? I know we cannot help our feelings ; but we can try to take no notice of them, and not act upon them."

"That is all very fine, but I simply cannot, Gertrude."

"Yet what is there that is so difficult ? Uncle John's appearance and manners can really do you no harm ; they are no injury to you. It is all a matter of imagination. If you would not dwell upon your aversion, it would shrink up into nothing, for it has no foundation."

"I tell you, Gertrude, that it would be far easier for me to struggle against if it had a better foundation. If he had injured me, I could forgive him. I may be ill-tempered, hot, what you please, but I am not resentful ; I know I am not. If I were resentful"—and then Emma paused, her countenance assuming an air of gloomy thoughtfulness—

"if I were resentful, Gertrude, you would not see me speaking calmly, and bearing patiently with a person who has deeply injured me"; and tears of passionate emotion now coursed each other down her cheek.

"Whom do you mean, Emma?" asked the bewildered Gertrude.

"Whom do I mean, Emma?"—and Emma looked her sister full in the face—"I mean Algernon."

"Algernon! why, you and he have always been such great allies."

"Yes, we were great allies, and I have stood his warm friend on more than one occasion, but your ally sometimes proves treacherous and ungrateful. Algernon has been both in respect to me, yet I bear with him, and betray no anger against him. I do not know, indeed, that I feel much; none, at least, which I cannot control."

"You perfectly amaze me, Emma. What do you allude to? What has Algernon done?"

"All he can to destroy my peace and mar my happiness; but what is the use talking?" she said, breaking off abruptly, "I want to go to sleep now"; and Emma buried her face again in the bedclothes.

Gertrude knew she had no chance of hearing anything further that night, so she put out her candle, and betook herself to her own bed, with a heavier heart than she had brought up-stairs.

CHAPTER XXIX.

APPREHENSIONS AND CONSULTATIONS.

"OH, MA'AM! the fat is in the fire," exclaimed Rachel the next morning, the moment she was free to address a word

in private to her young mistress. She had been hanging about for the last five minutes, to watch her opportunity, when Gertrude, as usual, should go down to make the tea. "The murder will be out as sure as sure before long," she continued.

Emma looked up in her face with a mystified air. "What do you mean?" she said. "Cannot you speak out? you quite frighten one, talking about fire and murder in that strange way. What murder will be out?"

Thus exhorted to speak plainly, Rachel *did* speak plainly. "It will be all out about Captain Baines before long; that is all I have got to say."

"What will be out about Captain Baines?" asked Emma sharply.

"Well, all about the letter to you, and my speaking to him in the street, and everything else; and it will come round to Mrs. Wyndham's ears very soon, you may be sure, and then——"

Emma, now thoroughly alarmed, entirely forgot her dignity, which up to this time she had endeavoured in some measure to maintain, and impatiently asked for an explanation. The barrier was broken down at last; Rachel was free to say what she liked, and Emma was bound by self-interest to listen, and to tolerate the freedom of her attendant.

"Well, it is just this: that dull little minx, Mary, who is sharper, however, than I gave her credit for, saw me standing talking in the street to the Captain, and saw him give me a letter; and she showed plain enough that she knew who the letter was for, and said I was paid for what I did, and that was the reason I could wear smart caps. It all came, in fact, of some remark I made on the girl's own cap which affronted her; and then out comes all this. She is very close, and I dare say I should not have heard a word of what she had seen if this had not happened; but she will pour it some day, I expect, into Mrs. Tyrell's ear. Mary

knows very well, you see, that the Captain is a beau of yours. James told her that, and how he leans over the carriage saying sweet things to you in the Park. She talks more to James than to any one, I fancy ; but I am not afraid of *him*, he will never venture to say a word to your Papa and Mama. I am not sure of Mrs. Tyrell ; if she should take it into her wise head that it was right to tell a thing, she'd stick at nothing, and face everybody—that's my notion."

Emma sat listening to this rigmarole in mute consternation. At last she inquired what reply Rachel had made to Mary.

"Of course I denied it all outright, and told her it was a fib. What could I do? I wasn't going to betray you, for certain."

"Do you think Mary has told Tyrell?"

"Not yet, I am pretty sure. Mary's not much of a gossip, and is in no hurry to tell anything, but, you see, Mrs. Tyrell pumps her—pumps her conscience, I mean ; and that takes time, and won't be done while we are so busy."

"But will be done, you think?"

"Yes, when there is time for a good hour's sitting and prosing by themselves. If the Captain's a-going to come forward," added Rachel after a slight pause—for she was aware that the present circumstances allowed her considerable freedom, of which advantage she was not slow to avail herself,—“that makes a difference, of course, and the whole thing will not matter a straw."

Emma was in for it now ; there was no help for her ; whether she would or no, Rachel was her confidante, and, truth to say, at that moment it was a certain relief to have a confidante of some kind or other. Accordingly she replied to her tire-woman's question that, owing to unexpected obstacles, it was impossible for the Captain to present himself as her acknowledged suitor just yet. "I have every

hope," she added, "that, when able to do so, Papa and Mama will make no objection ; but in the mean time, and before anything has been said to them, I should be very sorry that they heard through others that a letter had been privately addressed to me. It was an imprudence on his part ; it was no fault of mine ; but, if it came out in the way you suggest, it would prejudice their minds against him." Thus did Emma endeavour to put the whole affair in the best light she could, and to save her own self-respect in the eyes of her inferior.

Rachel listened and acquiesced, but did not believe a word ; that is, she did not believe that Captain Baines had a chance of success by a legitimate application in the proper quarter ; neither did she credit Emma with the hopes she expressed. It was a clandestine love-affair in her eyes, no more, no less, and was likely, with her aid, to end as clandestine love affairs so often do. "Then, if it is all right, perhaps we need trouble no further," she replied.

"But it is not all right if you think it is likely to come to Mama's ears in this roundabout way," said Emma.

"Mary will blab at last, you may depend," rejoined Rachel ; "but maybe the Captain will be clear of his difficulties first."

"How can I tell when he may be free?"

"Perhaps he can tell you. He's a-coming to dinner, isn't he, on Saturday?"

"No, he cannot come, and has left town, and I do not know when I shall see him."

"Dear me!" said Rachel ; "I wish Mary could be parted with. Really she is not worth her salt."

"Mama has it in her head to part with her at the end of the season, I know."

"Why not at once? There's fifty as good as her to be had at a moment's notice. I am sure, Miss Wyndham, you

could persuade your Mama ; you can persuade her a'most anything."

"But, if she was parted with immediately, she would not go immediately. She must, of course, have her month's warning."

"Unless you could contrive, ma'am, to hear of some treasure you wished to secure. That would be an excuse for sending Mary off, paying her month."

"Mama will not wish to do that, I fear," said Emma, who was quite aware that it would be considered an extravagant proceeding. "However, I must see what I can do. I fancy Miss Vincent did mention some girl to me, for whom she was desirous of finding a situation as soon as possible ; but I think it was a housemaid's place she wanted."

"That will be no difficulty," observed Rachel. "You can call her which you like, for the girl will have to work above and below."

"And then I do not think she was a 'treasure' exactly."

"What matter ? She will serve the purpose of getting rid of Mary ; and it will be hard if she is not the briskest and most useful of the two. Mary is only fit for a farmhouse."

And so the plan of operations was arranged. Emma was going to Cadogan Place that morning, to settle about riding in the afternoon, and was to endeavour to negotiate the business. But Mrs. Wyndham must be prepared by previous lamentations as to Mary's incompetency. Accordingly, Emma was eloquent on that subject after breakfast was concluded, and she was able to get her mother's ear without Gertrude being at hand, who was always ready to undertake a Quixotic defence of all who were accused. "What I am afraid of, Mama," said Emma, "is that she will make some great blunder with the cooking on Saturday. Her stupidity passes imagination."

"She will have very little opportunity ; M. Pattin and

Tyrell will pretty well share between them all the work that is of any importance."

"Perhaps so, but we have not always got M. Pattin. I believe, Mama, she positively delays Tyrell at her cooking rather than helps her; and I always hear Roper complaining of her for what she calls 'skimping' her work upstairs."

"Did Tyrell complain of her?"

"No, and would not, if she was twice the lump she is, supposing that were possible. I fancy Tyrell thinks that Mary is a daily grievance for which she ought to be thankful, as she was for your mortifying advice. Tyrell is such an odd body."

"She is, indeed; we really want a change."

"The sooner we get rid of Mary, I am sure, the better; she breaks a lot of things, she is very slovenly, and, when she is found fault with, she is sulky. She is not fit, in fact, for a gentleman's place, and, above all, not for a London house."

Then Mrs. Wyndham fell to thinking, and her daughter, after waiting a minute or two to allow time for the mental digestion of the facts imparted, said, "Mama, could I have the carriage to take me to Cadogan Place? I must see Minny this morning, to settle about riding and to practise. I will take my habit, and Thomas can bring the horse there at four o'clock."

"Why, you will be away nearly the whole day!"

"I cannot help it. I must attend to the practising, since I may be wanted for part of the evening at the piano, for M. Dubois cannot come till late. This is the only day before Saturday when Mr. Devereux can spare a morning. Oh, I forgot to say, Mama—don't you think it might be well to ask him to fill the vacant place at dinner? He has been very obliging about forming part of our band; he is pleasant enough, and, at any rate, will talk more than Gertrude, who,

besides, is very glad to escape the dinner—that is,” as she saw her mother hesitating, “if you like me to ask him, for I do not care a button about it myself.”

“Oh, yes, ask him by all means, my love. I was only wondering whether any one might send an excuse, and, if so, your father would like eight quite as well or better than ten.”

“But who is likely to send an excuse?” To this query Mrs. Wyndham made no response. She knew very well whose excuse she would be right glad to receive. “Ask Mr. Devereux, my dear,” she said; “it is well to do so; or I had better write a note: that will be more proper.”

“And now that I think of it,” added Emma, “I am pretty sure that Minny knows of a servant to suit us, if we should part with Mary. Shall I inquire about her? I know we could have her as soon as we wished.”

Her mother acquiesced, and the bell was rung to order the carriage forthwith to take Miss Wyndham to Cadogan Place.

After she was gone Algernon dropped in, or, rather, he came with a very definite purpose, although, as usual, he did not wear the announcement of any purpose on his face. Algernon took things easily. He and his mother were alone; John Sanders had gone to his dentist, and Gertrude was trying on a dress up-stairs. After a few questions and answers about the previous day's expedition, and some desultory talk on other casual matters, Algernon came out with his business. “Mother,” he said, “that fellow Baines is not only not gone into Yorkshire—I never thought he was—but he is hanging about London, or, at any rate, is in and out continually. Thornhill mentioned that he saw him yesterday in the Strand with Jardine.”

“You don't say so!” exclaimed Mrs. Wyndham, with a very long face.

“And I think I caught a sight of him myself yesterday

evening on the Kensington Road. He was a good way off, with his back to me, but the horse was like his, and the rider had a great air of him. Baines has some friends, I know, at Barnes, and I suspect he is staying with them, and slipping into town every day. What I fear is his meeting Emma in the Park. If she rode with me, as formerly, I should know how to deal with him, but she joins Miss Vincent's party now."

"Do you think, Algernon, that he would venture to speak to Emma if he met her, after what occurred the other day?"

"I am not at all sure he would not. He has plenty of assurance. How would he know that anything had been told her, or that she believed the story if she had heard it? He would bow first, and then, if she made a smiling return, as undoubtedly she would, Baines would ride up and join the party. Emma likes him; do not flatter yourself that she is indifferent; but, whether or no, we do not want her to be flirting with a man of disreputable character like this fellow. Something *must* be said to her now, and you must say it, mother."

"Say what? Algernon, you have no idea how difficult it is to deal with Emma."

"But I fancy I have a very good idea. Still it must be done, and you are the proper person to do it."

"Must I tell her what your uncle says about him?"

"No, not while he is here. I would not mention my uncle to her, or she would at once refuse to believe, and perhaps behave to him in a manner which would annoy you greatly. You must only tell her that we have heard things to the prejudice of Baines's character on the best authority, and that the acquaintance must be dropped. A cold bow would effect this, I dare say; and, if that were not enough, then monosyllabic answers to his observations, if he ventured to address her, would be sure to succeed.

Emma would know how to turn a cold shoulder as well as any one if she chose to do so."

"But supposing she objects, Algernon, and says she cannot cut him, with no apparent reason?"

"Then you must tell her that my father must be informed."

"My heart fails me, Algernon. How am I to do it? And, supposing she were to ask who told us, what could I say?"

"Let her think, if you like, that I have heard something; as indeed I have."

"Would it not be well, Algernon," said his mother, "that you should speak to Emma instead of me? You will acquit yourself much better, and it will come less unacceptably from you."

"I do not know that. She took it very ill of me when I spoke to her before."

"Then you have spoken to her already?"

"Yes, I did, and very gently too, about her flirtation with Baines. It was on the day after the party, when I had observed something suspicious, and she was extremely cross, and would not yield an inch. Had she been disposed to take my advice in good part, I should not have bothered you about the matter."

"Do, Algernon, my dear, try again. It makes me so nervous, that I feel I should not speak at all as I should wish. She has a way of setting me down which I cannot get over;" and Mrs. Wyndham looked so imploringly at her son that he could not refuse his aid.

"If I speak, it must be in your name, mother, and as commissioned by you; after behaving to me as she did the other day, I would not of myself have recurred to the subject again."

"By all means; say I begged you to do so, and that I do not wish to talk about the matter to her, or that any notice should be taken of it. Oh, Algernon, I am so obliged

to you ;” and then Mrs. Wyndham remembered the ride in the Park that afternoon, and expressed her fears lest Captain Baines might be there, and speak to Emma before she had been warned. Algernon promised that he would join the Vincent party himself, have an eye on his sister, and communicate his message if he had the opportunity, which, however, he considered was scarcely probable. Then Gertrude came down, and Mrs. Wyndham, whispering to her son that it would be well to give her the same caution as her sister was to receive, left the two together, and betook herself to her own bedroom.

Here she found Roper, pondering over an open drawer. The lady’s-maid seemed to be busying herself, but was really spinning out the time, in hopes her mistress might come up-stairs, for she had something she wished to say to her. This something did not relate to gowns or caps, although she commenced on that topic as soon as the looked-for opportunity presented itself. Mrs. Roper had been making her reflections, and the result was this—Mrs. Tyrell was supplanting her, if not in Mr. Bowles’s affections—for perhaps at no time did she flatter herself that she had positively won them—yet decidedly in her chance of winning them. Clearly she had none while Mrs. Tyrell was in the field, and her prospects would every day, no doubt, become more hopeless. As yet she did not think that they were irretrievably damaged. If Tyrell could be got out of the way, Mr. Bowles would probably fall back on his old habits ; particularly if the next cook was not to his taste. But how was her rival to be removed ? Roper had heard her mistress occasionally hint that some change might be made in the establishment when the season was over, but, even if this change referred to Tyrell, it was a long time to wait ; and what mischief might not be effected in the intervening weeks ! The refusal to go to the play had, however, evidently ruffled Mrs. Wyndham

considerably, and Roper thought that she might take advantage of her present state of temper to irritate her still further, and perhaps push her on to a desire of parting with the offender at once. For Roper knew that her mistress was proud and haughty, and extremely sensitive as to anything which she viewed as a liberty in an inferior.

None probably know our faults of temper better than the servants who wait upon us personally. They may misjudge us in other points, but in this they have the advantage of an experience which few possess. They see us at unguarded moments, and free from the kind of control which we almost unconsciously exercise in the company of those who are less prepared to put up with unreasonableness, caprice, and ill-humour than are our domestic attendants. The very grumbling which a lady knows would weary parent, sister, or child, is freely indulged in before her maid, particularly if she be an old servant, for in her, she knows, it will find a complacent listener, one who will even regard it as a kindness or a condescension to be thus taken into confidence in any form ; and many a confidence is, in fact, thus received and much light thrown on character and disposition in the eyes of the inferior. Mrs. Wyndham, unbending as she was to those beneath her, indulged occasionally in this species of confidential grumbling ; for she did not like to weary her husband with it, and was very forbearing in this respect even towards her children. Temper, if not mastered, but merely restrained, must have its safety-valve, and thus Roper came to know a good deal about her mistress's disposition. She knew her to be prudent, cautious, and not given to taking a hasty step save when under the influence of pride, and when suddenly excited by some supposed offence to her dignity. Roper accordingly reckoned upon this foible for leading or driving her in the desired way. A few words passed about the dress to be worn on Saturday, and some directions about the altera-

tion of a cap ; then there were some inquiries about the fitting of Miss Gertrude's dress ; and, when all this was concluded, and while Roper was thinking how she should introduce what she purposed saying, her mistress facilitated matters by asking her what she thought of Mary. " Will anything ever be made of that girl ? " she said.

" I doubt it, ma'am," replied the maid ; " there's not the stuff in her. She's slow, and won't be hurried ; you might as well hope to make a cart-horse gallop. The girl knows it herself, and I don't think she likes to be praised for doing better much more than she does being blamed for doing badly, because she thinks she will be expected to keep on like that, and she knows she can't and won't. She's a slug—that's my idea."

" And she is sulky, I understand, when blamed."

" Looks a bit sullen, sometimes."

" Yet Tyrell tells me she improves."

" Law ! Ma'am, nobody thinks so but Mrs. Tyrell ; and perhaps she don't think it, only it's the thing to say. Mrs. Tyrell is like that, you see."

" Like what ? "

" Well, I don't know, but Mrs. Tyrell makes a point to agree with no one who blames anybody. She thinks it Christian, or that it looks Christian, to say, ' We must hope the best, and believe the best of people.' I'm tired of hearing it, for I can't help thinking there's more show than reality ; particularly when I hear her blaming persons she has no business to blame, and giving her opinion so free about—about what don't concern her ; " and Mrs. Roper began busily shutting up the wardrobe, as if she was on the point of leaving the room.

But her manner had been so pointed in making this last observation that Mrs. Wyndham's curiosity was roused and her suspicions awakened. " Tyrell," she said, " is certainly very disagreeable in some things. I cannot understand

why she took that obstinate fit not to go to the play, when her refusal was evidently inconvenient to me, and unkind, too, by the other servants, who lost their amusement."

"Law! Ma'am," exclaimed Roper, "no more can no one else make it out, except that it is just what I said: she shows off her piety in that way. 'Now,' says I, 'Mrs. Tyrell'—I said this at dinner before them all—'if my lady had made a point as you should go, would you have gone?' And she said flatly, no, she wouldn't,—not if it had cost her her situation; for she didn't approve of the theater. 'Then,' says I, 'you must think yourself wiser and better than my lady, for she goes to the theater very often, and don't think it no harm. And then she said—would you believe it, ma'am, and before us all?—but I hardly like to repeat it."

"What did she say?" asked Mrs. Wyndham eagerly, with heightened colour; "it is your duty to tell me."

"Well, then, she said that you would have to answer for it to God; and, after that, the conversation was very properly dropped. I couldn't have sat on there if it hadn't."

Mrs. Wyndham remained silent a moment, with lips compressed and nearly white with anger. When she opened them it was to pour forth a violent and most unladylike tirade against the insolence of her servant. Tyrell's fate was sealed, and Roper saw that it was.

CHAPTER XXX.

DIVERS COMMUNICATIONS.

THE riding-party which Emma joined consisted of Miss Vincent and her sister Julia, their sailor brother, William, whose voice was reckoned upon for the coming Saturday, and the cousin, Mr. Devereux, whose violoncello had also been pressed into the service. It was the thick of the season, and the most crowded time of day for the fashionables. After riding about for some time they had been standing listening to the band in Kensington Gardens and talking to friends for about half an hour, when Miss Vincent proposed that they should, now that the evening was cooler, take a gallop in Rotten Row. All being willing, they turned the heads of their steeds that way. Miss Vincent was riding in front with her cousin; Julia, her brother, and Emma following. At this moment a gentleman on horseback, at some little distance, took off his hat to Emma. She did not at once discern who he was, and, though she returned the bow, which was distinctly made to herself, it was with an ambiguous expression, the result of hardly knowing what was her footing of intimacy with the individual. The cavalier, however, was not discouraged, but drew nearer in order to join the cavalcade. Emma then recognized Mr. Jardine, and coloured as she recollected the office which he had lately discharged for her lover. "I did not know you were an equestrian, Miss Wyndham," he said. "I do not recollect having previously had the pleasure of seeing you mounted. What a beautiful horse!"

"Yes, Mustapha is a beauty," replied Emma, stooping over the animal's shoulder to caress it, and thus to hide the

blush which she felt mantling in her cheek. "I am often here, however, Mr. Jardine; so you must have seen me, though you may not have noticed me."

"That would be difficult," said Jardine. "Does your sister ride?"

"Not in London, she is too timid; but I often do with my brother."

"He is not here to-day?" said Jardine, looking round.

"No, he is not here."

By this time Julia and her brother had passed on and left Emma to follow with Mr. Jardine. "My friend Baines," said her companion, "was quite *au désespoir* at having to leave London so suddenly." As he said this he glanced furtively at Emma's face, to see how she took the mention of Baines's name. The young lady had by this time recovered her presence of mind, and merely replied that she supposed he had been summoned into Yorkshire. "Yes, the old gentleman can do nothing without him; there were papers to sign. Baines and I, Miss Wyndham, I must tell you, are like brothers—we were schoolfellows, and have carried on our early friendship, which is not often the case. We are very unlike in every way, as, no doubt, you can judge, short as has been my acquaintance with you; that is, if you have condescended to form any opinion about me."

"Yes, I should think you were very unlike."

"But that makes no difference in the case of friendship. Often, I fancy, dissimilarity is an advantage. People fit each other better for not being dittos, and like each other all the better, too. I am sure I should not like a ditto of myself." Emma laughed. "This close and intimate friendship," continued Jardine, "which subsists between Frederick Baines and myself must be my excuse for venturing, on my short acquaintance with you, to be the bearer of a message from him."

"A message!" repeated Emma, scarcely knowing what to reply.

"Frederick," proceeded Jardine, "is the most generous, confiding, and, in some ways, incautious of men. He, in fact, gives others credit for the same openness of heart and sincerity as distinguish himself. He has made many friends by his fine qualities, but this carelessness has been the cause of his making some enemies also."

"Was this panegyric the substance of the message?" asked Emma, with a forced laugh, for in her embarrassment she was chiefly possessed with the anxiety not to seem embarrassed.

"No," said Jardine, "that is my preface, of course; what he wished me to say was that he hoped you would give him some opportunity of explaining a recent incident. He was quite aware that he had enemies before it occurred, but what he dreads is that it should have made some impression on your own mind. All this he could not say in the few hurried lines he penned before starting for the train, and which I had the honour of leaving at your door."

"Mr. Jardine," replied Emma, who, while he was delivering himself of this speech, had made up her mind what to say, "I do not exactly know to what incident you refer, but I suppose you mean that Captain Baines is aware that he has been represented to me in an unfavourable light."

"Just so," replied Jardine.

"Well, you may tell him that, when I have formed a favourable opinion of any one on good grounds, it is not easily shaken. I cannot, of course, answer for the impression which might be produced by evil representations on others."

"On Mrs. Wyndham?" said Jardine. Emma assented. "Of course you cannot," he continued; "and Mrs. Wyndham would naturally yield the more ready credence to what came from her brother."

Now, what with the noise made by the horses' hoofs and other sounds, together with the prepossession existing in her own mind, Emma thought he said "*your* brother"; Uncle John was so completely *hors de cause* in her estimation that such a mistake was not surprising. "My mother," she said, "is almost certain to believe whatever Algernon says, and to side with him."

"That is only natural," replied Jardine, without betraying himself. A light had burst in upon him, and he inwardly rejoiced that he had not compromised himself. Evidently the Palermo incident had not, as yet, reached Emma's ears.

"But I am much puzzled," continued that young lady, "as to what can have occurred between my brother and Captain Baines, or how Captain Baines should know that Algernon has endeavoured to prejudice me against him."

"He must explain these things himself," replied Jardine. "All I will say is that he knows that your brother has hearkened to some unfounded calumnies affecting his character. Baines is the soul of honour, and feels this deeply; and, above all, he is most keenly sensitive as respects your—your good opinion, Miss Wyndham."

"Until I see reason to change this opinion, he may rely upon it I shall continue to think of him as before," replied Emma.

"Those words of yours, which I will faithfully convey to him," answered Jardine, "will afford him the deepest satisfaction. He is likely to run up on Friday, though he must probably return into Yorkshire at the beginning of the week."

"Now for a gallop," said Minny Vincent, looking round; and the whole party broke into a rapid canter.

When they reined in their steeds at the end of Rotten Row, Emma's face looked bright and joyous from the exhilarating exercise, the roses which it had called into her

cheeks adding lustre to her fine dark eyes. She really looked very handsome, and Jardine, as he glanced at her, thought that, after all, his friend had not shown such bad taste; he could almost have fallen in love with the girl himself. As he could not, however, permit himself this amusement, he was content to pay his compliments to the horse. "How splendidly your animal steps, Miss Wyndham!" he said. Emma smiled very graciously, for Mustapha was a great pet; but at this moment, and before the smile had faded from her lips, a, to her, unwelcome apparition came on the field of view. It was her brother Algernon. He bowed cordially to the Vincents, then, looking round at Jardine, he returned his recognition very coldly.

"I have been in search of you all this half-hour," he said, addressing the party generally. "I expected to find you down by the Serpentine; and I fancy we have been following each other like Evangeline and her lover, only the finale has been more fortunate."

"You are quite wrong, Mr. Wyndham," replied Minny Vincent; "we have been standing for a long time in the crowd, listening to the band in the gardens."

"Only that you were talking all the while yourself, Minny," said her brother William.

"You saucy boy!" replied Minny, half threatening him with the tiny whip in her little white-gloved hand—clearly no lover had yet come to mar the playful fraternal affection.

"You have been making up for the standing since," observed Algernon; "I thought I should never catch you up. Splitting along *ventre-à-terre* in that way, on a hot summer's evening, is sharp work."

"Oh, we never take more than one gallop; but we must have one good gallop," replied Minny, "and, as we are not going home directly, our horses will have time to cool."

"I must take my leave now, Miss Wyndham," said Jardine, who had looked at his watch in order to give the

idea that he was leaving for his own convenience and not because he was put out of countenance by her brother's presence. "Your dinner-hour, I think, on Saturday is half-past seven; is it not?" he added.

"Yes, as nearly so as our guests enable us to make it," replied Emma.

"I will be unfashionably punctual," he replied; and then, bowing respectfully to her, and making a sort of sweeping salutation to her companions, in which he avoided meeting Algernon's eye, he turned his horse's head and galloped off in the Kensington direction.

"I did not think you were as intimate as that with Jardine," said Algernon to his sister.

"As what?" she asked, dryly.

"Intimate enough, I mean, for him to join you."

"He joined me, not I him," answered Emma; "so you must take him to task, not me, for the familiarity, if so it is to be reckoned. I conclude he thought it allowable, as he is to dine with us on Saturday."

No more was said; Algernon moved on to join one of the Vincent girls, William Vincent falling into the vacant place by Emma; and so the cavalcade proceeded for about a quarter of an hour, when Miss Vincent said, 'We must be turning homewards, for I find it is getting late. Papa likes his dinner punctually at a quarter past seven. We cannot get him beyond that; so, after we have seen you to Berkeley Square, Emma, we shall not have much spare time to get back to dress.'

"I will take care of my sister," said Algernon; "so you can wash your hands of her." They were then near Grosvenor Gate, and the Vincents, who had run the time short, as young people are apt to do, were glad to resign their charge and hasten home, forgetting, I fear, to take their horses in cool. Emma did not enjoy the thoughts of her *tête-à-tête* ride, nor did Algernon, for very good reasons. He

had an unpleasant task before him, and he disliked unpleasant tasks mightily, having inherited his father's aversion to being bothered. But it must be done ; so he would acquit himself of his commission at once. No preparation could make what he had to say palatable, as he knew very well ; besides, there was short time for its delivery. "Emma," he said, after a brief pause, "I have a message for you from my mother, of which I am the reluctant bearer ; indeed, but that she insisted, not wishing herself to have any conversation with you on the subject, I should have declined to interfere." He paused a moment, but, as his sister remained silent, he went on. "We have heard a very bad character of Baines, and my mother wishes the acquaintance to be dropped."

"How can I cut a gentleman I know so well as Captain Baines ; and that for no ostensible reason ?" asked Emma, commanding her inward emotion as well as she could.

"You need not positively cut him ; should he bow, you can return it in such a manner as shall give him to understand that he is not expected to speak to you. Should he speak, however, you must answer very shortly, and show by your manner that you do not desire to continue your acquaintance with him. He will take the hint, no doubt."

"And pray, why am I to act in this strange way ?"

"Not strange, if you knew the circumstances ; and surely it is enough for you to know that circumstances there *are* which make him an unsuitable acquaintance for you ; and, indeed, for any of us."

"And what are those circumstances ?" asked Emma. "Only tell me what they are, and what is your authority for believing them ?"

"You might trust *me*, I think ; not to speak of my mother. We both of us liked Baines ; I was very intimate with him, as you know ; you cannot suppose that we should cast him off without good cause."

"Then why all this mystery? If you can prove your point, why do not you speak out plainly? If you are unwilling to do so, can you wonder that I should suspect you have given heed to some calumnious report, very likely a most unfounded one, but that you think it safest to believe it or, at least, to act upon it lest it should be true? At the same time I suspect you know very well that I should not consider that there was evidence to support it. I, too, like Captain Baines; and I do think it is most unreasonable to require me to cut a gentleman I like and value without knowing why or wherefore I am to do so disagreeable a thing. It is persecution to press me to it. I simply cannot."

"Emma, you are the most foolish and obstinate girl I ever met." This was a great deal from her good-tempered and easy brother. Her face flamed with anger, and, seeing her about to burst forth in some vehement response, Algernon added, "You need not fear my persecuting you, Emma. I have given you my mother's message, as I was bound to do, and have now done with the business; so you must settle it with my mother—and with my father."

The mention of her father sobered Emma somewhat. "Has my father been spoken to, then?" she asked.

"Not by me; that is all I can tell you. Only, I suppose, if my mother cannot get you to hear reason, she will have to call for my father's interference."

"Algernon," said Emma, "I am quite willing to listen to reason, but I am not a person to be led blindfold. As soon as it is proved to me that Captain Baines is worthless, I shall be the first to turn my back upon him; but my sense of justice, if that were all, forbids my behaving rudely and unkindly, until I see cause why I should put another, and myself also, to so much pain."

"You must go your own way," was her brother's curt rejoinder.

When they reached the door of the house in Berkeley Square, after helping his sister as usual to alight, Algernon rode off, and Emma entered alone.

During her absence a communication of another sort had been made, of which the reader must be apprised. Mrs. Wyndham had formed a hasty resolution—namely, to part at once with Tyrell. She was inwardly conscious that this resolution *was* a hasty one, and the offspring of temper, but she was bent on giving her offended pride this satisfaction ; and it must be given at once, or she might lose the bitter pleasure altogether. She remembered that Emma had recently opposed her parting with Tyrell, and she would probably do so again—a supposition in which she was, however, mistaken. Now, she knew that it was very difficult for her to withstand her daughter ; besides, at the bottom of her heart, Mrs. Wyndham herself did not desire to part with Tyrell, and reason, she was aware, would recover its sway when her anger had subsided. She knew her to be honest, trustworthy, and economical, and as good a cook as could possibly be expected for her very moderate wages. Moreover, Mrs. Wyndham had gone through a good deal of trouble with her previous cooks. With Tyrell she had experienced none. No complaints had ever reached her ears, and there was peace in the household, such as there had never been for any length of time before. Even the affair of the play would probably have appeared less offensive upon reflection, and a doubt might have arisen as to the precise import of the conversation retailed. At present Mrs. Wyndham's anger was at white heat, and she was unable to weigh reasons or to consider anything calmly.

So she sent for Tyrell and gave her warning. "I can put up with a good deal," she said, "but there are some things which self-respect forbids me to overlook. Insolence is one of these things. I cannot suffer a servant of mine to hold me up for censure to the rest of my household. There

is an end of all authority if this be allowed. You must be aware, Mrs. Tyrell, that this is what you have done. I offered to send you to the play, with the view of giving you some amusement. Of course you were free to decline, but common gratitude and respect might, at least, have imposed silence on you, and deterred you from haranguing my other domestics on the impropriety of play-going, and on the account we shall have to give to God, myself included, for partaking in these unlawful diversions, as you are pleased to consider them." Then Mrs. Wyndham paused—she expected, perhaps half hoped, to hear some justification, explanation, or excuse from the lips of her servant; but, as Tyrell remained silent, she raised her eyes, which had been fixed on the cover of a book while she delivered herself of this speech, got by heart beforehand, and then she saw the same radiant expression on Tyrell's countenance which she had remarked on a previous occasion. This irritated Mrs. Wyndham afresh. "Have you anything to say in your defence?" she asked.

"Nothing," replied Tyrell.

"You cannot, then, be surprised," resumed Mrs. Wyndham, "if I should be undesirous that a person who speaks in this offensive manner should remain any longer than is absolutely necessary under my roof. To-day is Wednesday; I give you to this day {week to make your arrangements, and I will then pay what I owe you, and also the remainder of the month's wages.

"Thank you, ma'am," said Tyrell, and retired. She went down to the housekeeper's room, and sat for a moment before the table, her head resting on her hands. She was thinking. She had been accused of what she had not done, and had not said a word to exculpate herself. She was utterly friendless, and, with the exception of three pounds remaining to her from her wages, and her clothes, which were of little value, she had no earthly possession. Her hand had ever

been open to the poor, and, had she not been recently paid her quarter's wages, there would probably not have been nearly as much as those three pounds in her purse. Under these circumstances, was it right in her to have made no effort to retain her situation? "Yes," she said to herself, "I have done right." She had years before made a pact with her God that she would never justify or excuse herself unless duty or charity required her to do so. And neither duty nor charity had required it; nay, she could not have justified herself save by accusing another. She had been silent, and would remain so, were starvation to be the consequence. She drew some well-worn tablets from her pocket, and read what was written in them, probably the pact of which I have spoken; then she took the pencil and added these words: *Non loquendo, sed moriendo, confessi sunt*.—"Yes, that shall be my motto for ever; I will die, but not speak."

The reader may ask whether that was a wise and good resolve. Good for those who can make it, and, above all, keep it; and who are divinely moved to make such a sacrifice; but to the many, no doubt, such a determination would be a snare. Tyrell, however, was not an ordinary Christian; there are few of her class, though possibly more than is suspected, for the world knows them not, or misunderstands them. There was deep peace in the heart of this lonely one; while perhaps at that moment there were no two persons in the house more miserably uncomfortable than Mrs. Wyndham and Mrs. Roper—Mrs. Wyndham, because conscious of having done a foolish and perhaps an unjust thing; and Mrs. Roper, because her conscience stung her for having been both false and treacherous.

So occupied was the lady with her own reflections, as she sat in the back drawing-room, that she was not aware of Emma's return until she entered in her riding-habit. Mrs. Wyndham did not know that Algernon had brought his

sister home, and had hardly expected that he would have found any opportunity for private conversation during the ride, so that she did not suppose that the dreaded communication had already been made, particularly as Emma's countenance did not evince disturbance. She was flushed, it was true, but that was not remarkable considering the heat of the day and the exercise she had been taking ; and, while running up stairs, she had rapidly come to a resolution regarding her own behaviour. Her mother, she knew, did not wish to talk the subject over with her, and she, on her part, thought it wise not to provoke her in any way to depart from this purpose—for what was the use ? Emma felt she must now take her own line, whatever that might be ; discussion could profit her nothing, and might be very hurtful. Resolved as she was not to give up her lover, she knew that, if she rashly betrayed her determination, her mother might take the alarm, and speak to her father. And so she determined to be impenetrable, and to behave as usual, so as to disarm suspicions.

“My love,” exclaimed her mother, with a start, “I did not hear you arrive. Do you know I have been doing something in your absence which I fear you will not like.”

“What is that ?” asked the daughter, in some alarm, for her head was full of her own affair.

“I have given Tyrell warning.”

“Is that all ?” said Emma, quite relieved ; “well, it was sure to come to that at last.” Then Mrs. Wyndham told her story. “I think you did quite right, Mama ; indeed, I do not see what else you could do. Tyrell did not deny the charge ; so, of course, it was true.”

“Well, I am sure I don't know,” replied Mrs. Wyndham. “I dare say Roper made the most of it, but I am so glad you do not blame me. Tyrell is such an odd person, one cannot make her out. She looked all up in the skies

again, the same as the other day ; not like a guilty person at all."

"Because she does not think herself a guilty person. She *testified*, and now she is a *martyr*, she thinks, for having testified. I should not wonder if she went mad some day."

"Poor thing !" ejaculated Mrs. Wyndham, who had considerably cooled down now that her pride had received its satisfaction, and who almost, if not quite, regretted the step she had taken.

Emma perceived the relenting mood, and, as she was now desirous on her own account to get rid of Tyrell, she was resolved to keep her mother up to the mark. "It is done now, Mama ; and I am sure it is a good thing over. Papa would never have been easy till she was dismissed. If I were you I would send Mary off, too, at once ; otherwise you will lose a good chance. Minny has a girl there who will suit us well ; she is as strong as a horse, and has never been in a London place. They have been kindly giving her a bed, and looking out for a situation for her, but the bed will be wanted next week, so Minny must send her *protégée* back into Wiltshire if she is not suited."

"I shall have to pay the month's wages to Mary as well as to Tyrell," said her mother, doubtingly.

"That is not much, Mama ; and this other girl will be satisfied with eight pounds—Mary had ten."

"But it may seem harsh to be so hasty," urged Mrs. Wyndham.

"It will be a positive kindness," replied Emma. "Mary is losing her health in London ; she is just like one walking in her sleep ; so the sooner she is back in the country the better."

Emma, as usual, prevailed. But there must be a substitute found for Tyrell, and that within a week. Here was another dilemma. "Perhaps, Mama," said Emma, "we

may hear of some one glad to come for the next two months. If you have to pay a little more you will save the board-wages, which the cook must have had while we were at the sea-side."

In short, Emma smoothed away all difficulties so cheerfully that Mrs. Wyndham's equanimity was pretty well restored. "What a treasure Emma is!" thought the poor mother. She had, however, been so very doubtful, only a few hours before, as to what the state of the "treasure's" temper might be on her return from her ride—during which it was just possible that Algernon might have found an opportunity for delivering his message—that she had made Gertrude write an excuse to Madame d'Héricourt and give up dining out that day. Her presence would relieve Mrs. Wyndham from being thrown entirely upon Emma's society during the evening. So poor Gertrude had been sacrificed; and it was a great sacrifice.

"I suppose," said Emma, "Gertrude is gone long ago."

"She is not gone at all," replied her mother. "We shall be out, you know, to-morrow night, and I thought she had best keep quiet."

Emma was sharp enough to divine the real motive, and was, indeed, too well used to her mother's "white lies" ever to give more credit to her veracity than the case seemed to warrant; but, of course, she kept this knowledge, like many other things, to herself.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE DINNER AT MADAME D'HÉRICOURT'S.

WE must go back an hour or two. John Sanders came up to the drawing-room ready to start, at about a quarter to six. He found Gertrude there.

"Please to look at me," he said to his niece. "What do you think of me? How do you like me?"

"Very much, uncle."

"But how do I *look*, particularly when I grin?"

"Oh, your teeth, uncle! I see now; you have got your new teeth. How they improve you!"

"Don't they! Why, I look quite young again. Madame d'Héricourt will take the alarm, I fear, and shut her door against me, as one belonging to the dangerous classes."

"The dangerous classes?"

"Gay young men, I mean, to be sure."

"I do not think she will be afraid of you," replied his niece, laughing.

"Well, I never can get a compliment out of you, Gertrude."

"But it is a compliment; I mean you look steady and good. She would let you in if you were ever so young. She does not shut out all young men; there is a Mr. Rochfort who goes there, and, between ourselves, uncle, if you will not betray me, I fancy, or, rather, Emma fancied, that she wants Anne to marry him, and that that is one reason why she discourages Algernon. She thinks Mr. Rochfort very good, and so he is indeed, though he is not near as handsome or agreeable as Algernon."

"So Mama likes the steady one best, and Miss the showy one."

"Please don't repeat this," said Gertrude imploringly.

"Oh, no," said her uncle, with a funny face of deep mystery. "Now I must be going ; there comes my cab."

"Uncle," said Gertrude, "I am so vexed, so cross, that I cannot go with you ! I should have liked to go with you so very much."

"You must not be cross, chick."

"I cannot help it ; and it seems for no reason at all that I am kept at home ; that is why I am so particularly cross."

"All the same, you must not be cross. I will give you a feminine reason : if you are cross, you will look cross, and that will spoil all your beauty. My chicken's beauty is her sweetness ; she is not a sort of Clorinda, who could look handsome in a blaze of anger ; not but that I am rather a sceptic about looks which are *dolci nell 'ira*, but, if there are such looks, you cannot deal in them, for sure, my pretty, you would only look peevish ; so you must be satisfied with looking sweet, like an Erminia."

"Oh, uncle, you have read Tasso !" ⁷²

"Yes, I have read Tasso. Did you think I had read nothing, and had always had my nose in a wine-cask ?" Gertrude laughed, and threw her arm affectionately round him. He drew her fondly towards him and kissed her forehead. "God bless you, dear one," he said ; "I am as sorry not to take you with me as you can be to be left behind."

Before Uncle John arrives, we will listen to a short dialogue which had taken place between Madamed'Héricourt and Eustace Rochfort, when he called the previous morning to give his answer in person to her invitation to dinner. Eustace, as the reader knows, was very grave. His exterior gravity was, to a great degree, the exponent of his sterling goodness. Life was a serious thing with him ; he deeply realised its significance, its importance. He lived in the Divine presence, and had a correspondingly strong sense of the hatefulness of sin, and an abiding fear of offending God by word, look, or deed. Well is it when a young man

walks thus cautiously, even if he should walk, in consequence, a little stiffly. Algernon's freedom might be, and was, graceful ; but how much carelessness of evil lay beneath it ! Still such stiffness is, in itself, far from a merit ; it is an imperfection. Eustace's temperament inclined him, if not to severity—he had too warm and feeling a heart to be severe—yet to a certain reserve and excessive seriousness which is apt to repel rather than attract, in the young particularly.

So strongly had Madame d'Héricourt felt what must be the impression he was calculated to make, especially by contrast with his engaging rival, now that disappointment had added a fresh shade to his brow, that, it will be remembered, she advised him to be very sparing of his visits at her house. She had now asked him to dinner, at the suggestion of Anne herself : so, when Eustace came to give his answer in person, she thought it well to offer him a few words of advice about his behaviour. "You will not take it ill of me, I am sure," she said, "if I recommend you to cultivate a little more cheerful ease of manner in society. You fail to do yourself justice, Eustace. You must try and break through your shyness."

"I am aware," he replied, "of my fault, and should be glad, any way, to be told of it by you, my kindest of friends. Unfortunately, the deep disappointment under which I am suffering makes the struggle to be gay a very arduous one."

"There will be the more merit in making it," replied the lady. "It is a charitable duty to society, both because it is kind to make others feel at their ease, and because we must avoid giving the idea that our good principles make us morose or rigid. I should be afraid to dwell much upon the duty of endeavouring to please, when speaking to most young persons, for fear of encouraging vanity, but I know there is no danger of that sort with you. The danger lies another way."

"I really will try and follow your advice," replied the young man.

"And do not be too wise, Eustace ; unbend somewhat. If you would even be a little foolish sometimes, people would like you all the better. Perhaps you may say that I preach but do not practise ; but, then, remember that I have passed my youth ; I am a mother and a widow ; no one expects me to be frolicsome, it would be out of place ; but some natural joyousness of manner is looked for in those who are only entering life."

"Ah !" said Eustace mournfully, "I wish I had the talent of some who have the gift of pleasing and of saying light airy things, upon whom everything sits gracefully, while others, like myself, have only the power to love—to love, perhaps, far deeper than they do."

"Never mind about that," said Madame d'Héricourt ; "dismiss those thoughts and those comparisons, and act naturally, and as, I think, you ought to act. In so doing you will also be acting with the most prudence, and this may come in as a secondary motive. I know you cannot as yet resign yourself to the disappointment of your hopes as regards my daughter. I should be very sorry to say a word which might indiscreetly re-awaken them ; for, indeed, at present there is no ground whatsoever for fostering them. Still, I will say one thing : I do not think that my child has by any means, as yet, made up her mind to accept Mr. Wyndham, even if she had my consent, which remains at present in abeyance. Meanwhile, she is weighing the whole subject with a calmness and an impartiality which do her infinite credit. I should not myself be surprised should she end in thinking that such a marriage does not offer to her sufficient guarantees of solid happiness." Eustace's countenance brightened up. "Of course," added his friend, "supposing she should reject him, and supposing also that no vocation for the religious life should develop

itself, it would still remain doubtful whether you could succeed in winning her affections ; but, believe me, if you wish to avoid what would make this undertaking more difficult, you will behave as I have advised. Do not let her suspect that you have ever entertained a thought of her as your future wife. It would only make her extremely uncomfortable, and thus a distant feeling would spring up between you. It will be time enough if ever she accepts you, to tell her you have loved her almost from childhood ; at present it will be wise in you to satisfy yourself with cultivating the friendship which she undoubtedly cherishes for you, and to behave with the ease and confidence which are warranted by long and intimate acquaintance."

This was good advice, and Eustace Rochfort knew that it was.

John Sanders arrived nearly half an hour before the dinner-time, for which piece of extra punctuality he apologised. Madame d'Héricourt, however, was ready to receive him, and glad to have some more talk with her new friend before the other guests made their appearance. "I am so sorry," she said, "that dear Gertrude could not come."

"And so am I not to bring her, but Mama said 'No,' and, for the life of me, I cannot see why. Emma is never contradicted ; my nephew has but to look a wish ; it seems to be only poor Gertrude who ever gets a check."

"Algernon is evidently a great favourite."

"You *may* say that. Mama treats him like an emperor. Papa does not seem quite so loving."

"Of that I had no opportunity of judging. I have seen Mr. Wyndham only once or twice, and never in his son's company."

"You saw a good deal of my nephew, I know," said Sanders ; "and I know something more," he added, winking significantly—"as a secret, of course."

Madame d'Héricourt smiled. "I concluded," she said,

“that Algernon had told his mother, and your sister would naturally tell you ; but Mrs. Wyndham and I have had no conversation on the subject. Indeed, there was nothing to converse about, and I should have felt awkward had she broached the subject.”

“You don’t mind my having done so, I hope,” said Sanders. “I fear that I blunder sometimes.”

“Not in the least. The sole reason that would have made me feel uncomfortable in Mrs. Wyndham’s case is that she clearly thinks her son perfection, while I have required a certain period of probation, which seems to imply a doubt on that head. But one cannot be too careful in a matter of this kind. I have endeavoured to bring up Anne in what the world would call rather a strict way. She has quiet and retired tastes, and would be entirely unfitted for the wife of a man of the world, even supposing his religious principles, and moral character generally, to be ever so good. She thinks so herself.”

“I know very little about my nephew,” said Sanders, “except that he is good-looking and pleasant-spoken, and, I should say, good-tempered, so far as I can judge ; but I think you are very wise to be cautious in so serious a business.”

“Believe me, I should not be guilty of the bad taste of asking your opinion of your own nephew,” replied Madame d’Héricourt. “I was not even indirectly seeking to know it.”

“You are very welcome, Madame, to know it. My sister, of course, would be ready to make mincemeat of me if I did not cry her darling up to the skies, but that is not my way. Truth before everything ; and I do not think there is a bit of kindness, but quite the contrary, in helping on unsuitable matches. As it happens, I know very little, as I said, of this nephew of mine. He is a ball-going, club-going young man at present, no doubt. Perhaps he might

prefer a quiet fireside and a good wife—there's no saying. He thinks so, I dare say, just now. As for his religious principles—well—I literally know naught about them; but, if I were you, I should put him well through his catechism before I gave my daughter to him.”

“Algernon Wyndham,” replied Madame d'Héricourt, “is not one whom it would be easy to put through his catechism. You would find him slip through your fingers in the most graceful manner, if you tried to bring him to book.”

“I would pin him, however,” said Sanders; “would not I? If people slip about in that way I get suspicious.”

“And then,” continued his new friend, “I must confess to a weakness—there is something very engaging about the young man. When you are talking to him, he contrives to get round you. You cannot help liking him, and he is so natural in his manner that every suspicion is lulled to sleep for the time. Besides, he does not go deep into any subject; so you have no opportunity of probing him, if you would; and there is a gentle playful wit about him which would turn away your knife, I think, if you ventured on any such operation.”

The conversation was here interrupted by the arrival of Eustace Rochfort. Soon after, the young ladies made their appearance. Anne shook hands very cordially with Eustace. “We have not seen you for a long time, Mr. Rochfort,” she said.

“I have been very busy, with my nose buried in law books lately,” he replied—(Eustace was studying for the Bar, and was reading very hard, so this was no untruth),—“and I have felt so dull and stupid most evenings, that I have thought it best not to inflict my company on my friends, even when I could have spared an hour. I am more at leisure now, and, I hope, less stupid.”

“Business must, of course, have the first place,” replied Anne, who thought she must say something.

“ ‘Business first,’ they say, ‘and pleasure afterwards,’ ” replied Eustace, who also thought he must say something, in order to comply with the advice he had received ; “ but, unfortunately, I shall be cheated of the pleasure, for I find you are going away very soon. No more of our pleasant reading evenings for a long time to come. They seem quite a thing of the past and of a bygone epoch. But we are all getting into the serious work of life now ; at least, I am ; and, as I expect to be called to the Bar next spring, I have scant time for recreation.” This speech, and, above all, the exterior cheerfulness of its delivery, cost Eustace a great effort, for which, it is to be hoped, the reader gives him due credit.

“ I should not like to be a lawyer,” observed Pauline.

“ What profession would you like, Poll ? ” asked Anne.

“ Not to be a soldier and get killed, nor a sailor and get drowned.”

“ Civil engineering, I think, might suit you,” suggested Anne ; “ you are very bright at mathematics and that sort of thing.”

“ Indeed ! ” said Eustace.

“ Why that ‘ indeed,’ Mr. Rochfort ? Do you think I am bright at nothing ? ” asked Pauline. “ But I don’t enjoy the mathematics particularly. I fancy I should have made a good surgeon—that is, for small jobs ; for I should not have liked cutting off legs. But I get thorns out of fingers very well.”

“ Do you, indeed ? ” interposed John Sanders, who had been listening to the young people’s conversation while Madame d’Héricourt was reading a note she had just received. “ Then you shall operate on my hand. I have a small splinter in it.” Pauline was delighted, and got out her needle forthwith. “ Be merciful, however, for my skin is *so* delicate,” said Sanders.

They went to the recess of the bay window, whence.

might be heard Pauline's merry laugh as the patient affected to cry out with pain. "The skin—the epidermis, I think doctors call it—is so thick, Mr. Sanders; it is not delicate at all," exclaimed the lively operator.

"The Abbé, unfortunately, cannot come," said Madame d'Héricourt to her daughter Anne and to Mr. Rochfort, who both expressed their regret. "We have dwindled down to six." Pauline did not dine with them.

At this moment a knock announced Padre Giglio's arrival. He was accompanied by a Mr. Pierpoint, a member of the Warwick-street congregation, and a friend both of Madame d'Héricourt and of Rochfort, although considerably the latter's senior. It need scarcely be added that he was a good Catholic. He was also a very active member of the Brotherhood of St. Vincent of Paul, and untiring in his exertions in all works of charity. This information Madame d'Héricourt communicated to Mr. Sanders (who had escaped from the young surgeon's hands) while the two guests were on their way up-stairs.

"My good friend Mr. Sanders, it pleases me so much to see you!" exclaimed Padre Giglio, as he clasped his friend's hand in both of his with affectionate cordiality. "What a good fortune! And how are you, dear friend? and la Teresa—how is she?" And then he clapped his friend on the shoulder, and almost hugged him, with that overflowing warmth which is so characteristic of the foreign, and especially of the Italian, priest, in whom the tender charity of the sacerdotal heart is unchecked in its expression by the reserve which our insular manners impose. There were many questions to ask and to answer, and then dinner was announced, and they all went down.

Eustace, by Madame d'Héricourt's desire, took his place at the bottom of her table, having Anne on one side and Mr. Pierpoint on the other, while she herself was seated between Padre Giglio and Sanders. The conversation was

pretty general ; it never flagged, and the subjects started, as well as the mode in which they were treated, were such as must interest sensible men and women, and, above all, Christian men and women. Not that they were by any means always directly religious ; but just as in a worldly circle, albeit the conversation may not be invariably what we characterize as essentially worldly, the spirit of the world will commonly underlie and pervade what is said, so in the party gathered round Madame d'Héricourt's board, the conversation had in it a savour of heavenly things, even when the topics were on the surface merely earthly and occupied with only temporal concerns. Nor was the element of wit wanting. Padre Giglio was in that respect eminently gifted. Many amongst us can recall to mind the marvellous effect produced by the union of the sublimest pathos with the keenest and most caustic satire in the preaching of his fellow-countrymen who have given public missions or retreats in our land, and of one, above all, whom they who were so fortunate as to hear never can forget. They will remember how at one moment he could thrill and electrify his hearers by bursts of the most touching eloquence, and at the next make some cutting, though playful hit, or call up some ludicrous image, for the condemnation of vice and folly, which it cost them an effort to listen to with becoming decorum. Padre Giglio had his share of this species of talent, by no means rare among Italians, and especially among Italians of the South—the Padre was a Sicilian. Sanders had a good deal of mother wit himself, and could always take his share pleasantly when it was a question of harmless, but not therefore aimless, fun. He had also the advantage of perfect acquaintance with Padre Giglio's fatherland and with Italian life ; so that the two played each other off admirably, to the hearty amusement of the whole party.

Eustace Rochfort also mingled in the conversation, espe-

cially when it turned on any solid or practical subject, in a manner which was extremely creditable to so young a man, his pertinent remarks bespeaking both the observer and the thinker. Perhaps Eustace had never come forward as much, or said as many words together, in company before. He obliged himself to do so, yet his manner was perfectly natural, and the thoughts he expressed were the genuine utterances of what was passing in his mind at the moment or was evoked by what others put forth. It was no making of conversation on his part; it was simply the taking an embargo off his tongue and allowing himself to speak. Eustace Rochfort was one of those rare characters who would prefer that others should speak to speaking themselves. So reserved and devoid of vanity was he that, in all simplicity and from preference, he would withhold even the most pertinent observation if he thought another person in the company might say, or was likely to say, what was equivalent, or what in his modesty he esteemed better worth hearing. So far from regretting that others should be beforehand with him and, so to say, take the words out of his mouth and get the credit for furnishing information which he could have supplied as well or better, he lent himself habitually to such a result. Hence Eustace was a very silent person in society, and might often, for any effort he made to prove the contrary, have been supposed to have nothing to say where he had really a great deal. Now, however, in compliance with the counsel he had received, he spoke out what occurred to him, and the consequence was that he made himself for the first time in his life very agreeable in a general circle.

Anne held her tongue, and added nothing to the conversation, but not a word was lost upon her, as her intelligent countenance proved. She was an excellent listener; on this occasion there was perhaps the less merit, inasmuch as the conversation rewarded attention; but, when it was

otherwise, Anne was none the less sure to give attentive heed to what others said. She never practised the art, so common in society, of seeming to listen while we give our thoughts licence to be three parts elsewhere. Poor Gertrude, who, had she been present at the regretted dinner-party, would have listened as well as Anne, was by no means a conscientious listener when not interested. But Madame d'Héricourt had impressed this duty strongly on her daughter. It was a part, she considered, of Christian courtesy, and Madame d'Héricourt was both a thorough lady and a thorough Christian. "Do unto others," she would say, "as you would they should do unto you," even when your acting otherwise seems to be of no importance, and would not be detected. Which of us would like to be spending our observations on a pretended listener?" Now and then Eustace would make an observation to Anne, suggested by the subject in hand, to which she would reply briefly, but always to the purpose.

The gentlemen rose from table with the ladies, after the foreign fashion, and all went upstairs together. They found Pauline in the drawing-room, sitting in the open bay window, with her kitten and a book upon her lap.

"How much of that book have you been reading, Mademoiselle Pauline?" asked Eustace.

"I have read a few scraps now and then," she candidly replied; "but I have been watching the riding parties coming back from the Park; and so has pussy," and she buried her nose affectionately in its fur.

"Very like a pussy yourself, I think, Poll," said her sister. "You have your eyes after everything."

"Do you know, Mr. Rochfort," said Pauline, "if Anne were sitting at the table three yards from the window, and a troop of horse went by, drums beating and colours flying, she would not raise her eyes from her book, or take the trouble to get up to go and look at it."

"I can quite imagine that," replied Rochfort. "On the other hand, all the housemaids in the street would have their heads stretching out of the windows to stare at the soldiers."

"That shows that it is human nature," replied Pauline, "and one likes people to be human creatures."

"I am very human about flowers, at all events ; how delicious these smell !" said Anne, stooping over an ornamental flower-stand in the window.

"It is the tuberoses," observed Eustace, "which are so sweet. There is something in the smell of flowers," he continued, "which gives me a sense of pleasure and of sadness at the same time."

"I know that feeling so well," replied Anne, with a bright smile, and I was saying so to some one the other day, who could not at all understand what I meant. Who was it ? Oh, I remember now," she added with a slight blush, "it was Emma Wyndham. She said that if she was sad she always knew what had made her so."

"Undoubtedly there are associations whose touches are so evanescent as to evade our scrutiny," replied Eustace. "However, I think I partly know why the smell of the flowers of early summer makes me feel sad. I was brought up in the country and loved it ; my lot now shuts me up in a town. Nothing recalls a time or a place so intimately as the sense of smell. It is more than a reminding. It brings everything back in a manner which quite transcends memory."

"That is very true," said Anne ; "but will you not be able to go and breathe a little country air soon ?"

"Not, I fear, until late in the autumn, when I must get some change for two or three weeks. So, when you are revelling amidst summer sights and sounds at Héricourt and picking violets in the woods, you must sometimes give me a pitying thought in my dingy rooms, with my head bent over musty books."

"Indeed we will," replied Anne.

"I don't pity you at all," said Pauline; "you do it because you like it. You need not be a lawyer, if you do not choose; and I dare say you look to being a judge some day—perhaps Lord Chancellor. You have all these great things to yourselves; we never can be anything but plain women, so must not be grudged our little pleasures."

"Not *plain*," said Eustace, laughing. "Besides, I do not grudge you your pleasures; I only wish to share them."

"Which is greedy of you. However, I am glad you do not think us 'plain,'" said the merry girl; "it is the first attempt at a compliment I ever heard you make, Mr. Rochfort—*Je vous en fais mon compliment*. Perhaps next time we shall arrive at being pretty."

"You saucy girl!" said Anne; "you let your tongue run away with you—you do indeed." If Mrs. Wyndham had been present, she might have been inclined to recall her opinion that Pauline could only talk about her kitten.

The coffee was handed round when the company had ascended to the drawing-room, but Madame d'Héricourt preferred having tea in a more cozy manner. The cloth was laid at nine o'clock by a neat-handed bright-looking French girl,—Madame d'Héricourt did not keep a footman. The tea was brought up ready-made, together with the hissing urn, in order to replenish when necessary; fruit, cake, and biscuits being also set on the table."

"This reminds me," said Mr. Pierpoint "of our Cheshire fashion,"—Mr. Pierpoint was a Cheshire man—"at least what was our fashion twenty years ago; but who can say if it remains so in these days of change?"

"I did not learn the fashion in Cheshire, undoubtedly," replied the hostess; "for I never was there. It is an idea of my own; and I like it because it collects a party together."

"And a capital idea, too," said Sanders. "But what is this?" he exclaimed, as, on his way to take his place, he kicked a saucer on the carpet, and, looking down, perceived a small, square, white cloth on which it stood. "It is well I did not put my big foot into it! Who is going to have his or her meal in penitential fashion on the floor?"

"That is the cat's table-cloth," said Pauline, laughing. "Tom *will* pull his bread off his plate, and makes a mess."

Anne cast an imploring look at her mother—"Don't you think Mama," she said, "that when people are here, this had best go away, and the cats be fed elsewhere?"

"If you turn them out, Mama," interposed Pauline eagerly, "Tom will come and scratch so at the door. He has nearly torn all the cloth off the slips already."

Madame d'Héricourt hesitated, and then compromised matters by desiring the said table-cloth to be removed further off.

Anne, who would have felt a little impatience had she considered it decorous to indulge such a feeling, when it was a question of her mother's wishes stooped to pick up the saucers—for there were two—while Pauline seized on the cloth. Eustace came to lend his assistance. "I hope there are attendants enough now on these two cats," said Anne.

"I am glad to hear of my old friend Tom," observed Eustace. "Oh, there he is, I see. I feared that his nose had been put out of joint by the new favourite."

"Titty is a dear," replied Pauline; "but my Tommy is as much a pet as ever, I can tell you."

"Pauline's heart is capacious enough for a dozen cats," said her sister; "and I should not wonder if we had not as many saucers by-and-by on the carpet."

"What fun that would be!" said Pauline. "But, Mr. Rochfort, it is all very fine, your taking Tom's part now;

you used not to like him—indeed, I thought you quite disliked cats.”

“Pardon me, it was Tom who did not like *me*.”

“Because you took no pains to please him. No one likes anybody who does not try to be liked.”

“That is a very wise remark, my little woman ; we will all enter it in our pocket-books,” said John Sanders ; and he pretended to write it down in his own. “ ‘No one is ever liked who does not take some pains to be liked.’—Have you got it down, Mr. Rochfort ? ”

“It is not necessary,” said Eustace ; “I shall remember it. But I really do not plead guilty to this indictment of enmity to cats. My landlady’s cat comes and sits by the hour on my rug, and sometimes even opposite me on the table ; and, when I am deep in study of a big folio, it will put its paw on each leaf as I turn it over.”

“What is it like ? ”

“It is a tiger, and very large. His name is Sam.”

“How I should like to see it ! ” said Pauline.

“I am sure I shall feel greatly honoured, Mademoiselle, if you will pay me a visit ; and so will Sam.”

“If you take to cats, you will get quite into Pauline’s good graces,” observed her sister.

“We were always very good friends,” said Pauline ; “were we not, Mr. Rochfort ? ”

“Oh, yes ! that we were,” he rejoined, “and always shall be. We three have known each other too long not to be very good friends ; ” and he glanced at Anne.

“I am sure of that,” she said, with much cordiality ; and then Eustace helped the cats to their milk, and thought he had succeeded in making himself foolish enough for one evening.

The remark about the friendship had cost him a great effort, but, had he known all, he would have felt rewarded for it. Anne inwardly thought how conceited and imperti-

nent she had been in suspecting this good friend of being in love with her. How could she have ever fancied that such was the case ! It was a wonderful relief to her now to think that it was all a mistake on her part ; and no young lady perhaps ever felt more pleased at a totally opposite discovery. Eustace gained much in consequence. Anne could like him to any extent as a friend, and she really thought she had never known him so pleasant or agreeable before ; in which last opinion she was not far wrong.

" You must come and pay us a visit in Sicily, Mr. Rochfort, when you make your autumn trip," said Sanders. " It will be just the vintage time, and we can show you something of peasant life in a gay form. I have a *vigna* in the country,—a vineyard, I mean, for I make as well as sell wine. It is a merry scene, and we always close the vintage with some sports for our people."

" I fear my time will be far too short for allowing myself that pleasure," replied Eustace. " It would be almost 'there and back again.' I must content myself with a visit to Brittany, or somewhere near at hand."

" A month would not be too much to give to Sicily," said Sanders.

" And then," added P. Giglio, " there is our mountain to ascend ; your countrymen love climbing mountains. There are some Englishmen very good men, like my friend there, and some not so good, but they all ascend mountains—the good and the bad alike. How often have you been up our dear old unquiet neighbour, Mr. Sanders ?"

" I could not say. I think I have gone up with pretty well every friend who has been so kind as to pay me a visit."

" Talking of Englishmen who are not quite so good," resumed the Padre, " do you recollect a certain Capitano Baines who spent a winter at Palermo ?"

" I should think I *did* remember him."

" It was said that you chased him away. If so, I hold

it for a good work ; but here he is—in London. Do you know, I saw him the other day. I have seen him several times.”

“I should not wonder.”

“I was preaching from the altar-steps one day in the Warwick Street chapel, and, my eye happening for a moment to rest on the congregation, whom must I descry but the Capitano Baines ! He was in the second row of benches, leaning back like this”—and the Padre threw himself back in his chair—“what you English call lolling. Poor man, he was getting through the *fastidio* of my sermon as best he might for the sake of the music and singing ; and always, for I have seen him about three times, he had the same person with him ; a young man, too, who did not loll as much, but I fancy he was also a Protestant. I never saw him except with the Capitano, and always they were put there, in the second bench.”

“Those two seats are vacant just now,” observed Mr. Pierpoint. “I know the couple, and always regret when they come ; for they neither of them kneel, and one of them, that is he whom you call the Capitano, leans back in such a comfortable fashion for himself as to interfere much with the comfort of the man who *does* kneel behind him, which is your humble servant. I happen to know who the other is. He is not a Protestant, but, like his friend, comes merely for the music ; he is, in fact, hardly more than a Catholic in name ; which is perhaps not surprising, since his father is well known to be only a nominal Catholic. Were it otherwise, indeed, he would not have been likely to sit in Parliament as the representative of an English constituency. But Percy Wyndham is a great supporter of the present Ministry, and has a patron whose influence brings him in.”

An ominous pause followed this speech of Mr. Pierpoint's. Madame d'Héricourt did not know what to say ; she was

utterly struck dumb; and Eustace, of course, thought it right to hold his peace. Sanders broke the silence at last by very quietly saying, "Mr. Wyndham is my sister's husband; he is a good and hospitable brother-in-law to me when we come in each other's way, and a worthy man, I doubt not; but I fear that his religion sits very easy on him. So it did on his father before him; and that is his best excuse. He was badly reared. As to the young man, my nephew, I know but little of him, for he does not live with his parents—I am staying at their house—so I only see him occasionally. However, it is but just for me to mention that I dined in company with him one Friday, and he abstained—so far, so good; for more I cannot vouch."

"I am really much distressed," said Mr. Pierpoint, "at having inadvertently alluded to relatives of yours, Mr. Sanders. I beg most sincerely to apologize."

"There is nothing, my dear Sir," replied Sanders, "that needs apology, or about which you need trouble yourself for a moment. I am very sorry, not that what you have mentioned should be *said*, but that there should be grounds for its *being* said. You have merely repeated what is, doubtless, generally known; so there has been no offence against charity on your part. Think no more about it, my dear Sir."

And what did Anne think meanwhile? No one looked at her except Pauline, who was quite in the dark as to Algernon's proposal or her sister's favourable sentiments regarding him. She tried to catch her eye, in which attempt, I need not say, she failed, but even the observant Pauline might, and indeed did, fail to detect traces of any deep emotion on her sister's face. Anne had great self-command; there was a slight variation in her colour, it is true, and a look of pain passed over her countenance, but this was only natural. Madame d'Héricourt was pained also, and, to do her justice, her first feeling was sorrow for the thing itself, for before all things she was a Catholic, and had the interests

of souls at heart. No doubt, her thoughts turned very quickly towards the probable effect of this announcement on her daughter, an announcement which had hardly taken her by surprise, for, as the reader knows, she had always entertained misgivings respecting Algernon Wyndham's religious principles.

Soon after, Padre Giglio rose to take leave; Eustace did the same. "You are going early, Eustace," said Madame d'Héricourt.

"I *must* go, I fear; for I have a good deal to do before I can take any rest. I should get through nothing if I did not set myself a daily task." And so he wished all a hasty good night, and left along with the Italian priest.

"That young man is one among a thousand," said Mr. Pierpoint. "If he curtails his recreation hours for study, he can find time for works of mercy. Often do I meet him by the bedside of the sick and suffering. He is feet to the lame and eyes to the blind,' as Job said; and there is at this moment a blind old woman who likes to be read to, and whom he visits twice a week, often sitting a whole hour with her."

"I am not surprised," said Mme. d'Héricourt, "though I knew nothing of all this."

"He is one who does not let his left hand know what his right hand does," added Mr. Pierpoint. "Would that we had many such! He cares not for the commendation of man or woman."

"Only think of Mr. Algernon Wyndham being such a bad Catholic!" said Pauline, when the two remaining guests had departed. "We shall not be able to like him as well as we did."

Anne thought so too, but held her peace till Pauline had gone to bed. Then, as she kissed her mother, she whispered these words in her ear:—"Mother, I give up Mr. Wyndham from this hour, once and for ever."

CHAPTER XXXII.

GERTRUDE'S WEAKNESS.

EMMA, as we have seen, had settled her line of policy. This line necessitated the suppression of all manifestation of her inward disturbance. There were only the mother and daughters at dinner; Mr. Wyndham was at the House, which, although it was Wednesday, was sitting for the despatch of important business. No great effort was required to content Mrs. Wyndham in point of conversation. She could talk a good deal herself, and was quite satisfied with a cheerful reply which kept the ball going. Emma exerted herself successfully to do thus much, and Gertrude was some, but not much, help.

"So Mr. Devereux will come?" observed Mrs. Wyndham.

"Yes, he will come, and he is a fair stop-gap," replied Emma.

"A better one than I should be," said Gertrude.

"And a man," added Emma; "which papa prefers on this occasion. We shall be only three women, Mama, I think, altogether."

"Only three. Mrs. Abinger could not come until later; she has a friend staying with her."

"I am glad of it, for she is a dull, heavy piece of goods."

"However, we want her afterwards, for she makes up the whist party, and is a good player. Sir Philip likes well enough to have her for his partner, and is used to her."

"Lady Mordaunt is a painted old dowager," said Emma. "What a rum lot it is!"

"Lady Mordaunt is Sir Philip's butt at cards, so comes in very well also," said Mrs. Wyndham.

"She makes more fun, at any rate, than Mrs. Abinger,"

remarked Emma ; “ or, rather, she lends herself to be made fun of.”

“ Which Sir Philip enjoys,” added her mother.

“ What a horrid man he seems ! ” exclaimed Gertrude.

“ Algernon would quite agree with you,” said Emma. “ He says Sir Philip likes only two things—something he can eat, and something he can trample on. His toady, Mr. Poole, must have some experience of the last. However, *he* is not to be pitied, as he submits *con amore* to the process ; the *amore*, I suppose, being for the good things he gets at Sir Philip’s house, where he has the run of his teeth.”

“ We have got the toady, too, so are complete,” said her mother. “ Your father likes having them, and that is enough. I wonder how John will get on with this sort of party. I fear he will be quite a fish out of water.”

The conversation continued in this edifying style during dinner ; then they went up to the drawing-room, and after a while Mrs. Wyndham began to nod, and finally dropped asleep in her chair. She was disturbed, after no long enjoyment of her doze, by the opening and shutting of the hall door. It was the master of the house returning ; he had a key and let himself in. His step on the stairs did not sound gay or elastic.

“ What o’clock is it ? ” asked Mrs. Wyndham, rousing herself ; “ that’s your father.”

“ And very early, too,” said Emma.

Then Mr. Wyndham entered, and his wife saw at once, from his countenance, that he had something on his mind. She was not left long in suspense.

“ The Ministry,” he said, “ have been beaten by a majority of twenty to-night. It was a Cabinet question ; so they are sure to resign ; or, if they do not, they will dissolve Parliament, and take the sense of the country. There will be a dissolution anyhow ; for a Liberal Ministry will not under-

take to carry on the business of the nation with the present House, so we are in for a general election either way."

"I thought, Percy, that you did not expect a dissolution yet?"

"No, I did not; I imagined, as did others, that we should be able to carry through this Session, which was so near its close; and so we should but for this defeat on the India Bill. Our majorities, however, have been declining for some time, and it was the general persuasion that there would be a struggle when Parliament met again, which would necessitate either a resignation or an appeal to the country. It is a very serious matter for me that this crisis should have occurred some eight or nine months sooner than I anticipated, and that all the expense should have to be faced immediately."

"Will it cost so much? You are sure to walk over the course at Whittlebury. The Duke of Plumpton's influence is so strong there."

"I have little doubt but that it is strong enough to pull me through, but there will be a contest this time. It is very awkward, and the Spanish bonds are going down besides. That pleasant piece of news greeted me this morning, and now there is this confounded dissolution hanging over me."

Emma disliked this kind of conversation at all times; it ruffled her that things should not go prosperously. At this moment, however, all engrossed as she was with her own love affair, which was not likely, she supposed, to be affected in any way by these matters, she cared less about anything; but, as she was no longer needed, she was glad to escape to her room, with the excuse of fatigue. Gertrude did not remain very long after her, and left her father and mother still discussing the affairs of the State, and the state of their own affairs in connection with the same, which latter was,

of course, felt to be by far the most interesting aspect of the question.

Gertrude found her sister only partially undressed. She had put on her dressing-gown, and had thrown herself on her bed, where she lay sobbing.

"My darling," exclaimed Gertrude, stooping over her affectionately, "what *is* the matter? Are you ill?"

"Not ill," replied Emma; "only sick at heart; indeed, I think I shall break my heart—that is all—but who will care?" And she sat up, pushing back with her hand the dishevelled hair which had fallen about her face.

"You make me miserable, talking in that way, dearest," said her sister. "Shall not *I* care? and don't I care very much, though I do not know what it is that grieves you? Do tell me. Has it anything to say to what you hinted at the other night, when you told me Algernon had been unkind?"

"He has been more than unkind; he has been unjust, cruel, Gertrude, and—to me who would have done anything for him! He has taken away the character of the only man I love, or ever did love, or ever will love."

"Do you mean Captain Baines?" asked Gertrude. "I knew you liked him, but I had no idea you loved him."

"I *do* love him, I tell you; and he loves me devotedly, and I never will marry any man but him; I vow I will not; no, not if he had all the riches of Cræsus. If Mama and Algernon think that, by putting me off him, they will get me to make some great match, they are completely mistaken; and they will find that it is not so easy to turn me from my purpose, or seduce my affections when I have once fixed them."

"But, dearest, you would not wish to fix your affections on an unworthy object; and, if you had unfortunately done so in ignorance, surely——"

"But how do I know he is unworthy?" cried Emma,

passionately, interrupting her. "I don't believe it. If Algernon knows anything to his disadvantage, why does he not state what it is?"

"Because," replied Gertrude, "I presume it is no one definite thing to which he alludes; he spoke to me also about Captain Baines, and expressed himself very strongly as to his having a bad character. I supposed he meant he had led, or was leading, an immoral life. All I can say, Emma, is that, had I been the one who entertained a preference for this gentleman, what Algernon said would have been quite enough to make me withdraw it."

"That is," said Emma, looking fixedly at her sister, "because you never loved. I doubt if you *could* love. To love a person with a true love is to believe in him."

"But not against all reason, surely?"

"Not against all reason, certainly; but love makes you discredit calumny, and strikes back its shafts like a shield. It indignantly repels all suspicion cast on the loved one, particularly when you have yourself grounds for suspecting those who would insinuate the suspicion, of a concealed motive."

"But I do not think that either Algernon or Mama has any concealed motive. They might not like your marrying Captain Baines; indeed, they would probably object greatly; but I do not suppose they have an idea that you are thinking of it. I am sure I had not any suspicion myself. Still less, I am sure, are they manœuvring with a view to any other match. I am persuaded that they simply regard him as disreputable, and therefore an undesirable acquaintance. Algernon said that he knew that he was so on the best authority."

"Easy to say; but what *is* his authority? Why all this mystery? Now let us understand each other, Gertrude. You spoke of reflections on Captain Baines's moral character. Do not for a moment suppose that I make light of

anything wrong or sinful. I do not. But let us grant that it may be true that his life has not invariably been in accordance with strict morality; I would just ask one question—has Algernon's?"

"I don't know," said Gertrude.

"You don't know; nor do I. But would you pledge yourself that it has? As for me, I more than doubt it. He makes no assumption that it has; and I should say, from the tone of his language about himself, that he by no means professes to have been a pattern of strictness and regularity: yet here are you, I, Mama, and all of us, thinking him good enough for Anne d'Héricourt, who is purity and perfection itself. Don't think I am so blind as not to see that Anne is a thousand times better than I am. I know that I am not fit to hold a candle to her. However faulty Captain Baines may be, there cannot be as much difference between him and me as between that angel and our brother. Perhaps—very likely—I am quite as faulty in my way as Captain Baines in his, and should have been far worse had I possessed the unrestrained freedom of a man. Gertrude, we must make allowances for men; a man is free to go his own way, and he often, when young, will fall into faults—great faults, I know—what we call sins—but his heart is not always, therefore, corrupt; and so the time comes when he meets with one whom he really and truly loves, and this quite changes him and brings him back. Is such a one to be cast off, and by the very woman who has wrought this happy change? I say all this as putting things at the worst, and granting what as yet I am not bound to grant."

"I suppose," said Gertrude, "there are degrees in badness; a person may be habitually bad, or have bad principles, or he may have done something particularly discreditable. Algernon would not speak of Captain Baines in the way he does if he were no worse than himself or like the ordinary run

of men in the world. Plainly there is something more, something which Algernon views as a disgrace."

"Then let him say what it is," said Emma. "Yes, Gertrude," she added, and her face assumed a grave and earnest expression, "I will own there *are* acts which disgrace a man, and would disgrace him at once in my eyes; I mean dishonourable acts. If I loved a man better than all the world put together, better than any woman ever loved, and if I found that he had failed in true honour on any one single occasion, I would cast him away at once, and banish him from my heart. It is truth, what I say; I assure you solemnly that it is so. But Captain Baines is the soul of honour," she added proudly, adopting, unconsciously, the words which Jardine had used; "nor has any one that I know of dared to impugn his honour as a gentleman. If any one did so, I should of course insist on proofs; still I would yield to convincing proof. To vague accusations, I will not so much as hearken."

"But then," said Gertrude, making no reply to Emma's confident assertions of her lover's sense of honour, "there is the religion, if there was nothing else."

"Yes, I know that is an objection. But what are we to do? Almost all our friends and acquaintances are Protestants. How is it possible for us to determine never to like or to marry any one but a Catholic? Captain Baines is not at all bigoted, however, I can assure you, and would never interfere with my religion."

"And what do you mean to do?" asked her sister sorrowfully.

"Why ask me?" said Emma; "you cannot sympathize with me or understand me. Perhaps I have been foolish to tell you all this, but you took me by surprise. Perhaps even you will betray me," she added, with some bitterness.

"Betray you!" exclaimed Gertrude; "when did I de-

serve that you should speak those unkind words, Emma ? There is no one, you know, that I love as I do you."

"My dearest Gertrude, I do not suspect you," said Emma fondly. "I know you love me, and would always be true to me." And then the two sisters wept awhile, clasped in each other's arms ; after which they each prepared in silence to go to bed, and thus ended this unsatisfactory conversation.

The next morning Algernon came at about half-past eleven o'clock to report to his mother what had passed between him and his sister, but he found that she was already out, having gone with her two girls in the carriage to Cadogan Place, where she was to deposit Emma. Sanders was in the drawing-room. "Ah ! that is you, Algernon," he said as his nephew entered. "There is something I want to tell you ;" and then, without further preface, he related what had been said at Madame d'Héricourt's table in his hearing the previous day. "I know very little, my good nephew, about your religious observances, you see ; all I could say, I did say ; which was that I dined in company with you one Friday, and that you abstained. For more than that I could not vouch."

"It was very kind of you to take my part so far," said Algernon.

"Not kind at all," replied his uncle ; "it was the simple truth. Hearing you called a nominal Catholic, or pretty nearly so, it was only just to record my evidence, so far as I could give it ; it might go for what it was worth, and I was bound to give it."

"All the same," replied his nephew, "call it kindness, or call it justice, I owe you thanks."

"I should not," continued Uncle John, "have thought of repeating this—for there is no call to let people know all the disagreeable things that are said about them—but your mother told me, as a secret, that you had an eye to

that young lady there, as your wife ; and I suspect what was said will not help your prospects. Now as for me, I don't want either to make or mar the match, for whether or no you two would suit I cannot say."

"She would suit *me* well, I know," said Algernon ; "and, if she should accept me—I ought rather to say, be allowed to accept me—I shall endeavour to make her happy. She is better than I am ; I know that. I should not like her as well if she was not."

"It is honest of you to say so. Well, as I was going to observe, it is no business of mine to interfere either way, whatever I may think ; but it seemed only fair by you that you should be made aware how matters stood. If you believe you can explain that you are all right about your religion, you may prefer going to have it all out at once ; and, if so, you are quite free to say that I repeated to you what I had heard."

Algernon reflected a moment, and then said, "I do not think I shall go. I should only see Madame d'Héricourt. She will not let me see Anne, and, above all, not by herself. Left to ourselves, I feel confident we could come to an agreement ; but Anne is completely under her mother's influence, and her mother does not favour my suit. She is suspicious of me, and besides, she has, I feel certain, other views. Those French parents are so used to making their children's marriages for them, that they cannot reconcile themselves to the idea of free choice or spontaneous preference on the part of those most concerned. It is not *selon les règles*."

"I think you wrong her there," said Sanders. "So far as I can judge, Madame d'Héricourt is not at all set upon marrying her daughter ; but, of course, the opinion of so new an acquaintance as I am is not worth much."

"I don't accuse Madame d'Héricourt of exercising any constraint on Anne's inclinations," replied Algernon ; "but

Anne, no doubt, knows very well what her mother wishes, or does not wish, and this knowledge weighs upon her with a force which I have no power so much as to counter-balance, for the prudent mother will not let us meet. So there is little use in my going to the house to seek an interview. It would do no good, and would only be a bother. Besides, *Qui s'excuse, s'accuse*. I will let things take their chance; and my chance is a poor one, I fear. Thank you, at any rate, for preparing me;" and Algernon walked to the window, like one who considered that the topic was exhausted.

So it was; John Sanders had said what he considered it his duty to say, and did not desire to prolong the conversation. Presently he took his hat and went out.

Algernon was left to his own reflections, which were not pleasant. "I knew that rascal would be the ruin of me," he said to himself. "I would call him out, if he were not such a vulgar knave." But now, should he tell his mother? He would meet with plenty of sympathy and pity from her, but it is not all sympathy that soothes, and Algernon did not relish pity much; so he made up his mind that his mother's sympathy would minister no consolation to him, and that her pity would worry him. Had he and Emma been good friends, she would have been the confidante of his distresses, but this was out of the question now.

Mrs. Wyndham and Gertrude returned very soon, and, when the latter had gone up-stairs to take off her bonnet and shawl, Algernon gave his mother an account of his conversation with Emma during the ride home. "I could make nothing of her, in short," he said, "and get nothing out of her. No one can do anything with Emma."

"Do you really think she likes that man, Algernon?" inquired the anxious mother. "Do you believe, I mean, that she has any serious thoughts of him? Her obstinacy looks like it, and quite alarms me."

"Who can guess? I questioned Gertrude yesterday to see if she knew or would tell me anything."

"And what did she say?"

"She said that Emma seemed to like Captain Baines the best of all her partners, but she did not know how much she liked him."

"She probably does not know," answered Mrs. Wyndham. "I do not fancy that Emma tells Gertrude all that passes through her mind. I doubt whether, if she loved that wretched man, she would confess as much to her sister."

"Perhaps not in so many words, but sisters generally know each other so well that they do not need telling; and besides, most sisters do tell each other all their *secrets de cœur*."

"Emma, I think," said Mrs. Wyndham, "confides in me quite as much, or more than in her sister. I have always encouraged her confidence."

"Don't be too sure of that, mother. Sisters tell each other some sort of things more readily than they will tell their mothers. Gertrude, depend upon it, knows more than you do; but it does not follow that she will own to her knowledge. I asked her, however, straightforward whether she thought Emma was in love with Baines, and she certainly said, not that she knew of,—but she looked annoyed at being questioned. If you think you might get anything more out of her, you could try your hand. Certainly, if Emma is such an ass as to be in love with that fellow, we must take some further step for her disenchantment. She says, you know, that she would listen to reason."

"You mean that we had best let her know the whole truth, without waiting for my brother John's departure?"

"Yes, I think so; particularly as Baines is hanging about, and that Jardine is making himself so intimate. When does my uncle go?"

"Next Thursday."

"It would certainly be desirable to avoid this blow-up while he is here. My uncle is really a very good, friendly sort of man, and ought to be spared disagreeables."

"Yes, indeed he is," said Mrs. Wyndham. "Another reason," she continued, "for saying nothing more to Emma at present, is in order not to put her out further till the party is over. I depend upon her so much for management and arrangement, and, if she should turn sulky, the whole thing would prove a failure. With all my heart do I wish the invitations had never been sent out. The season will be brought to a premature close if Parliament should be dissolved, and all this expense, which just now it would have been such an object to avoid, will be entirely thrown away ; but it cannot be helped now."

"I suspect matters will be patched up for a while," said Algernon, "and that Parliament will not be dissolved just yet. A few necessary Bills will be hurriedly passed, and then there will be the prorogation."

"Whether or no, your father and I have settled that I shall go out of town with the girls as soon as your uncle leaves. We are parting with two of the servants, so it will be convenient on all accounts, and we need not replace them till the winter, if we do not return. This will be a saving. I am writing to offer myself for a week or ten days to Lady Ellerton, to whom I am always welcome, and there I shall await events. If Parliament should be dissolved, the girls and I shall move on to the sea-side at once, and not return to London at all. But I keep all this to myself until the party is over, for the same reason that makes me wish to avoid other annoyances—I mean on Emma's account."

"This is a sweeping measure, indeed," said her son. "Perhaps, however, as respects Emma it will not be a bad move. It will break through the whole affair of Baines in

the best way possible, for it will seem the natural result of other circumstances."

"So I think," said his mother; "it will disappoint very much, but cannot irritate."

"Ten days of Gorsham and Lady Ellerton will be a terrible price, however, to pay. Do you think, mother, you can get through those ten days—with London, besides, still in the full fling of gaiety, and Emma as cross as two sticks—without being extinguished?"

"I can get through anything, if necessary," said Mrs. Wyndham; "and now I will go up to Gertrude"—the mother and son had descended to the dining-room in order to avoid interruption.

Algernon then left the house, and Mrs. Wyndham returned to the drawing-room. Gertrude was reading, but soon laid aside her book, to which her mother's desultory observations, dropping in every minute or so, prevented her from attending, and took up her crochet work. Mrs. Wyndham's random remarks were only meant as prefaces to the main subject which she wished to introduce without any alarming formality. At last she broke ground thus: "Algernon told you yesterday what a bad character we hear of Captain Baines. It is very annoying that we should have got so intimate with him."

"Yes, very."

"And that Emma should have flirted with him as she has. Do you think, Gertrude, that she really likes him very much?"

"O, yes, she likes him very much; you can see that, Mama," replied Gertrude. "Algernon asked me the same question yesterday, and I told him all I knew." It will be remembered that Gertrude now knew a great deal more, but she had no mind to confess what she knew, so endeavoured to evade the subject without being guilty of a direct untruth.

"How I wish I knew if she really loves that man!" said her mother. "I should have thought that you, Gertrude, must have had such good opportunities of observing her, that you might make a probable guess at her sentiments. It is really desirable to know. If it is a mere passing liking it will wear off, and I should be sorry to annoy her by speaking to her on the subject; but, if there is anything deeper, then I must have a serious talk with her. Of course, I should be most kind and gentle, and should not name you."

Thus appealed to, what was Gertrude to do? Truth, respect for her mother, who was entitled to an answer on such a point, and even well-considered kindness to her sister seemed to demand a candid avowal that she had reason to fear that her sister not only liked but loved this man. She could have said thus much without repeating anything Emma had said, and without any reference to the passionate declarations of her determination to marry him; but then those words of Emma's—"Perhaps you will betray me,"—still rang in her ears; and her own energetic repudiation of the idea, and the tears she and her sister had shed in each other's arms, which were to her as the seal of a promised secrecy, rushed upon her recollection, and seemed to impose silence on her. She took refuge therefore in an evasion. "I told Algernon yesterday all that I knew," she repeated. She thought she saved truth thereby, but she knowingly allowed a false impression to remain on the mind of one who was entitled to an explicit answer.

But Gertrude had a false conscience on the subject of her duty respectively towards her sister and her mother. She had a sort of clannish feeling of honour with regard to all that her sister might say to her, while she had very misty views as to the lawful authority of parents, although her natural good-feeling and regard for her duty taught her to pay respect to them. Mrs. Wyndham's faulty system of

education was to blame for this in a great measure. Gertrude had, however, herself a defect, for which she alone was responsible. She was weak, weak of purpose, weak in resisting the influence of one who had a stronger will than her own, of whom she made a kind of idol, even while conscious of the idol's great faults, and whose frown, displeasure, or contempt she came practically to dread more than a dereliction of duty—in plain words, more than an offence against God's laws. And so Gertrude equivocated, and did not feel as if it was possible for her to do otherwise. But it was a fatal error. Had she said, as she ought, that she feared that the impression made upon her sister was deeper than a mere liking, then the whole truth would have been at once made known to Emma, and it would have saved her. She was quite sincere when she told Gertrude how deeply repulsive to her was a dishonourable act; and had she known that her lover was charged with such a disgraceful offence as cheating at cards, she would never have rested till she had sifted the matter to the bottom. But Gertrude did not say what she ought to have said, and what she did say served to lull her mother into a state of false security. The matter, Mrs. Wyndham now thought, might safely stand over a few days. When they had left London, then Emma should know all.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

A DISMISSAL AND A PROPOSAL.

ANNE was contented that her mother should at once write to Algernon and break off the affair, but Madame d'Héricourt thought that it was kinder, and, above all, more just, to

see the young man and acquaint him with what they had heard, and with Anne's consequent resolution. Although there was no probability that he could give any satisfactory account of his religious principles, and, still less, of his attention to his religious duties, yet, as the accusation had been made behind his back, it seemed fair to allow him the opportunity of speaking for himself, if only to prevent his thinking that he was hardly dealt with. So Madame d'Héricourt wrote him a note asking him to call on the following morning, but without alluding to the purport of the appointment. Algernon, however, knew well what he was to expect. "I have been judged and found guilty," he said to himself; "and now I am to be asked, like the criminal at the bar, what I have to allege why sentence should not be pronounced upon me. I do not know that I have anything to allege—nothing, certainly, which will satisfy my severe judge. It is a mere form; but I suppose it must be gone through. It is no use going, but I must go, of course." And he did go.

He was shown into Madame d'Héricourt's private sitting-room, where he found her ready to receive him, which she did with her accustomed kindness, tempered with a shade of gravity. She entered immediately on the object of the interview. She told him how they had heard, from the lips of one who was quite unaware that they were mutually acquainted, an account of him which had at once decided her daughter to put an end to all expectations of a future union between them. "No engagement subsisted, I know," continued Madame d'Héricourt, "and, in one sense, you were both perfectly free; yet, so long as my daughter's sentiments and yours remained unchanged, a species of tacit connection was maintained which must now be severed. Anne has often told me that no consideration whatsoever, no preference, however strong, would ever induce her to be united to one who did not strictly fulfil his religious duties;

and she wished me to write at once and say so. She said this before I had made the slightest comment on what we had heard ; so that you may rely upon it that my influence had no share in prompting her decision. It was I who thought it better and only fair by you, since the statement was made in your absence, to see you and give you an opportunity of justifying yourself, if able to do so, from the charge ; and in this proposal she acquiesced. I fear, however, from the confidence with which it was made, and the reference to notoriety, that it is only too well founded."

Then Madame d'Héricourt paused. It was as Algernon had expected—the criminal was called on to allege cause, if he could, why judgment should not be executed upon him. He knew well that he had nothing to say for himself. Had he been inclined to tell a downright lie, it could hardly have been successful, but, to do Algernon justice, he was not a liar. True, he, as well as his sister Emma, who resembled him in this respect, might not seldom be guilty of artifice, and tell small untruths, but they both of them shrank from a formal lie in any serious matter. Still he would not die without a struggle. If he could not say much for his past life, he could make promises as regarded the future. "No one," he replied, "can be better persuaded than am I myself that I am unworthy of your daughter ; but who *is* worthy of her ? I will say this much for myself, however, that not only do I love and admire her—that, indeed, were little—but I think I appreciate her excellence thoroughly. I love her and value her for those very qualities and virtues in which she is so immensely my superior. Is this nothing ? Surely it is at least a pledge that I shall endeavour so to conduct myself in every way as to give her no cause to regret having joined her lot with mine. Not only should I offer no obstacle to her religious observances, but she would attract me to a better fulfilment of my own obligations than at present I

can boast of. She would be as a guiding-star to my life."

"These are but promises and hopes," rejoined Madame d'Héricourt. "I do not question your sincerity in making the one or in expressing the other, but it is so easy to deceive yourself. Many have done so before. My daughter would not and could not trust to a promise. She regards what you now are. Husband and wife ought to be walking hand in hand along the same path; together they ought to be able to kneel at God's altar; their hopes, their desires, their aims ought to be one. She does not doubt, nor do I, that you would be kind; she does not doubt but that you would desire to make her happy; but all this would not satisfy her unless your first and supreme object was to love and serve God."

"I think," said Algernon, "evading the direct point, "that you hardly make due allowances for me. Remember how your daughter has been brought up; with what tender, fostering care every good disposition has been cultivated and all evil external influences have been sedulously excluded. Contrast this with my education. Brought up in a Protestant school, then launched upon the world practically my own master, free to choose my friends and my mode of life—I own that all this has told unfavourably upon me, and it has led to a neglect of my duties as a Catholic; but is no excuse to be made for me? I see it all now, and have seen it ever since I became acquainted with your angelic daughter."

"I assure you, I do make a thousand excuses for you, Mr. Wyndham, but you must yourself see that this is not the point. The question is whether, such as you are and as circumstances may have made you, you are one with whom my daughter would think it safe or prudent to connect herself by the most solemn of ties! Granting all you say, and that your admiration and love for her have led you to better

thoughts—what has hitherto been the result? God makes use, I know, of many and various means to recall us to Himself—even of our human affections, but this is only the bait, as it were, to allure us; we must return to Him for His own sake, or it is no real return. Excuse me, Mr. Wyndham, for questioning you so closely, but here is the precise point, so I must be plain. If you have only resolved to effect this return when, and if, you should be married to my daughter, then, I must say—and she, I know, would also say—that such a resolution carries its own condemnation on the face of it. If you had been really awakened to a sense of your soul's interests, you would have placed those interests in safety at once, and quite irrespectively of the accomplishment of some temporal object."

"I certainly should take the step to which you allude preparatory to my marriage," said Algernon, "and not merely as its consequence."

"But you have not done so yet, if I rightly understand you, nor are you, as it appears, preparing to do so."

Algernon was silent for a moment, and then said, "Not further as yet than I have stated. Such matters require time and reflection."

Madame d'Héricourt now rose from her chair. "Dear Mr. Wyndham," she said, "there is no use in our prolonging this distressing conversation. You do not substantially deny what we have heard of you, and all you can say is that a favourable religious impression has been made upon you by my daughter, which you doubt not would be deepened were you united; but this is not sufficient. I need not say that it is not sufficient to satisfy me, for, were I satisfied, Anne, I know, would not be so; with every sincere wish, then, for your happiness, we must part."

"Must it be so?" said Algernon with a sigh; "and I cannot see her to plead my own cause?"

"No, Mr. Wyndham ; the interview would only distress her, and she has, I assure you, quite made up her mind. You may also take my solemn word for it—she is, and has been, a free agent throughout. I have brought no influence to bear upon her at any time, and beyond the delay, in which she readily acquiesced, and the condition of not meeting while matters were in abeyance, of which I am convinced she saw the propriety, I have never in any way interfered."

"I am quite sure you have only done what you thought right," replied Algernon, "and I am very far from suspecting you of exercising any constraint upon your daughter ; but excuse me if I cannot bring myself to believe that your influence has not counted for much. There is an influence which acts silently. Perhaps I have no reason to complain of a mother's possessing and using influence of this kind. It is but natural. It has been my fault and mistake to choose too well ; to love what was above me. And now, in bitterness of heart, I must turn away from the bright vision which has been smiling upon me, and which seemed to make another man of me. You may have acted best for your daughter, Madame d'Héricourt, in rejecting me, but, believe me, you have acted the worst for me. You are throwing me back on the world and on a profitless, aimless life ; you are heading me back from the upward path——"

"I cannot allow you to speak in this way, Mr. Wyndham," said Madame d'Héricourt, interrupting him. "In the first place, I must repeat that it is not I who have, what you call, rejected you. I must protest against your throwing the responsibility of your future life, and the very salvation of your soul, as you seem to imply, either on myself or on Anne. It is altogether a delusion to attribute to others the blame of actions or courses of action which depend entirely on our own free will." Then, softening

her tone, she added, "My dear young friend—I must still call you by that name, for my feelings towards you are most friendly—believe me, that which regard for our own eternal interests and the grace of God cannot move us to do, neither can the love of any woman, however deep may be that love and however perfect its object. Seek the kingdom of God, dear Mr. Wyndham, and other things shall be added ; but do not aim at anything as the condition of seeking the kingdom of God. This is to set God below the creature. He is not to be had at that price."

Had Algernon, when he had sought and won the affections of Anne d'Héricourt, immediately set the affairs of his conscience in order, and begun a new life—could he have pleaded such a course on his part as the pledge of his sincerity—I think his chance even at this hour would not have been quite lost ; hopes for the future might still have been not inexorably excluded ; but he had done nothing of the sort. His reform had gone no further than a little superficial respect to some of the Church's precepts. He had abstained on Fridays, as we have seen, and attended Mass more frequently on days of obligation—that was all. Anything beyond was so closely bound up in his mind with the event of his marriage, and regarded so entirely contingent thereon, that he never so much as entertained the notion separately. Indeed, the very idea of what would be incumbent upon him as the husband of Anne was extremely vague and indefinite. It might be summed up in the desire to satisfy her, and in a certain attraction to better things, with which love for a beautiful and virtuous object will inspire the most worldly for a season. Madame d'Héricourt had sufficient penetration to discern this attitude of the young man's mind, and so she wisely left no door open to hope even in the event of his proving at any future time more worthy of her daughter's acceptance. Accordingly, to his final question, "Then there is

no hope for me, either present or future?" she replied, "I cannot hold you out the slightest. Everything must be considered as at an end." She held out her hand to bid him farewell. Algernon took and pressed it, and, departing without another word, left the house never to set foot in it again.

He was sad, very sad, but the disappointment had been less poignant because he had been prepared for it; indeed, from the hour that Madame d'Héricourt had seen him after his proposal and insisted on a period of probation, his hopes had been far from sanguine, and every day he had felt them decline. It was, therefore, the less difficult for him to conceal his sorrow from his mother's observation, particularly as she was at present too much engrossed with her own troubles. He was, at any rate, fully resolved not to mention the subject to her. There was another reason which made it easier for Algernon to conceal a disappointment than it would be for many—he never nursed his griefs. He loved himself and his own ease and comfort too much for any such unremunerative employment. Anne d'Héricourt had been a beautiful vision. The vision was withdrawn, and the pang was sharp; but, after some brief regrets, Algernon will set his mind to forget her. Emma had gauged him truly.

Leaving the young man to his meditations, as he takes his way at a lounging pace to his office, where he meant to bestow his ennui and painful distractions for the next two or three hours, we return to Berkeley Square. Mrs. Roper, it will be remembered, was suffering from remorse. Mrs. Roper was really not a bad woman, though she had done a very bad thing. She had, perhaps, never done so bad a thing before in her life. Jealousy and disappointment had urged her on, but no sooner had the act been perpetrated than she began to feel truly uncomfortable; and, when she ascertained that it had accomplished the object which had

been her inducement for doing it, she was miserable beyond expression. Every one in the house knew by this time that Tyrell had received notice to leave, and that the cause was something connected with her refusal to go to the play. This could not well be concealed, as it was evident that she was sent away in displeasure. Had she received the usual month's warning, Tyrell would have been able to withhold the reason; but, as it was, all jumped to the conclusion that she was parted with on that account, and, without telling an untruth, she could not deny that this was true in the main, although she refrained from satisfying the curiosity of any one by detailing particulars. Her mistress, doubtless, wished for a different sort of person, she said, one who would not inconvenience her in things of this nature; and she had a perfect right to make a change if she pleased.

"But not to send you off in that fashion, as if you had disgraced yourself," said Mr. Bowles.

"If I do not complain, Mr. Bowles," replied Tyrell, "no one need find any fault on my account."

"But you never *do* complain."

To Roper Mrs. Tyrell was gracious and kind in her manner as usual, but Mrs. Roper knew that this behaviour on her part proved nothing. She wondered whether her mistress had quoted her; anyhow, she feared that Tyrell must be aware that she was the calumniator; for no one possessed Mrs. Wyndham's ear except the lady's maid. To be sure, there was Rachel, who was a spiteful one, and had a grievance under which she was smarting, and Rachel was supposed to carry a good deal of gossip to her young mistress. But then, Rachel's evidence, unsupported by her own, would hardly be deemed sufficient. Conscience also makes cowards of us, and Roper was convinced that Tyrell must know the truth. So wretched had the poor woman become, that she would willingly have given away Mr.

Bowles to any one who would take him, if only she could have rid herself of the burden of this cruel lie. But what could she do? Unsay what she had said? That would have been to shame and disgrace herself in her lady's eyes. She would try to qualify her statement, however, and eat up as much of it as she could manage without stultifying herself entirely. "I hope, ma'am," she said to her mistress, while engaged in dressing her for the evening, "that you did not name me to Mrs. Tyrell. I should be very sorry she took anything unkind; and, indeed, I did not mean anything unkind, I am sure;" and Mrs. Roper could not restrain a faint sob.

"What's the matter now?" asked Mrs. Wyndham, looking round sharply.

"Well, ma'am, I was afraid, when I heard you had given Mrs. Tyrell notice, that I had—that I had not made myself clear."

"You made yourself very clear. You said that Tyrell was impertinent enough to censure my conduct, and to say that God would judge me for going to the play."

"Mrs. Tyrell certainly spoke out very severe about the theater, even when I reminded her that you, ma'am, went there," replied Roper; "but then, she is a very strange person about them sort of things. Of course, it aggravated me to hear her talk so, but, when I came to think of it afterwards, I was half afraid I might have took the thing up too strong like. Mrs. Tyrell, I believe, did not so much mean to blame you, ma'am, as to assert herself and her principles. She thinks a deal about her principles."

"But she said I should have to give an account to God."

"Yes, she said we should all have to, and included you, ma'am, of course, because we was talking of you."

"Well, I don't think I misunderstood you, or that you misjudged her, Roper, for she does not deny the charge herself. I never mentioned you, but I told her what I had

heard, and said I could not put up with such language. She may think Bowles repeated it."

"Law, ma'am ! she'd never think Mr. Bowles told of her."

"Or Rachel ; but what does it matter ? I am sure you need not distress yourself, Roper, for I should have probably parted with her when we left London, which may be very early this season if Parliament should be dissolved. Mr. Wyndham wishes for a superior sort of cook."

If there was some consolation for Roper in these last words, there was also what was calculated to cause grievous disappointment. If the family were going out of town so soon, she would have no time to bring her batteries to bear on Mr. Bowles's heart after her rival was gone. She must accompany her mistress ; the butler would remain on board wages in the London house. But the poor woman was too sincerely unhappy to feel this blow as she otherwise would have felt it. All that flashed upon her mind was the fact that she had burdened her conscience with a sin for nothing, and without any prospect of reaping the advantage it was to have produced for her. So she went up to her room to have a good cry.

Meanwhile Mr. Bowles's mind was as much occupied as was Roper's, but in a very different way. He had nothing on his conscience in the affair, poor man, though it distressed him greatly. Mrs. Tyrell was going ; going in a week : he had no time to lose. He was sitting in the arm-chair by the kitchen fire, which he now so frequently occupied. His fat hands were joined over his chest, and now and then he performed with them the evolution customary to one who is in the act of soaping and washing them ; or he occasionally twirled the two thumbs round each other. He was not aware that he performed either of these manual evolutions, but, with him, they were significant of a disturbance of mind.

Mrs. Tyrell was engaged about the grate with some culinary arrangements. "I suppose," she said, "we may

expect M. Pattin to look in very soon, in order to give his preliminary directions, and to see what will be wanted."

"Hang that fellow!" said Mr. Bowles, with a burst of energy rather unusual to him.

"Mr. Bowles!" ejaculated Tyrell in a voice half of surprise, half of remonstrance.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Tyrell, I am forgetting my manners; but, really, I am so sadly cut up about all this, that I cannot command myself. One thing I am resolved upon—I will not stay on here."

"Pray, Mr. Bowles, do nothing hasty. It would be such a pity. It would put the family out very much indeed were you to leave in this sudden way."

"Hang the family!"

"Why you are hanging every one this morning," replied Tyrell, who could not help smiling at this curious exhibition of wrath on the part of the usually placid butler.

"It will out—I am almost inclined to hang myself."

"I hope that is only a figure of speech, Mr. Bowles."

"Well, the hanging is; so I must confess. I shall not literally hang myself, but I feel somehow as if there was nothing worth living for just now; certainly there will be nothing worth living for here this day week; so I am going to give warning—that's all."

"Are you wise in doing that?" asked Tyrell. "This is not an uncomfortable place for you, I should think; and you hardly know what another situation might prove. Pray do not be hasty. I am much obliged to you, I am sure, for your kind interest about me, but am truly sorry that you should take the matter to heart in this way. I complain of no injustice myself, and, indeed, I do not think that I ever thoroughly suited either Mr. or Mrs. Wyndham. *You do.*"

"Then they may suit themselves with a new butler,—that is all I have to say, Mrs. Tyrell. There's no use

talking; I have made up my mind—quite made up my mind. I *do* take the matter to heart, that is exactly it”; and the thumbs twirled more rapidly than ever. “I mean to leave, and I have no thoughts of seeking another situation. I am going to give up service altogether. I am well able. I have got the means.” And then Mr. Bowles proceeded to explain how he had a pension from his last place, and a good sum in the Savings Bank. He was, besides, possessor of a small house at Tunbridge Wells, with a shop front. It had been his father’s, who had exercised some trade. What the trade was Mr. Bowles did not specify, but his parent had not got rich upon it; on the contrary, he had got into debt, and had parted with the house on lease for £30 a year. On this his father had lived for the rest of his days, helped by what his son could spare him out of his wages. “Since my father’s death, I have saved a considerable sum,” continued Mr. Bowles, “enough to set me up, as I intend, in the stationery line. The lease falls in next spring; I shall then occupy the premises myself, and get a quiet lodger for the drawing-room floor. I expect to do very well. Tunbridge Wells is a very nice place. Do you know Tunbridge Wells?”

Mrs. Tyrell did not know Tunbridge Wells, but had heard it praised, and she congratulated Mr. Bowles very cordially on his comfortable prospects.

“Yes, my prospects are comfortable,” said Mr. Bowles, “but there is one thing to be said: I shall feel lonely, or *should* feel lonely, by myself. I shall want a companion, some one who can keep my house for me, with whom I can sit down to a snug dinner. I should be as dull as an owl in a hollow tree all by myself. Man was not made to live alone, Mrs. Tyrell.”

Then Mrs. Tyrell asked if he had a sister or other near relative.

No, he had not. “To be plain, Mrs. Tyrell,” he replied,

"what I want is a helpmate ; and I think I know of one who would suit me excellently well."

"That is fortunate indeed," said the still totally unconscious Tyrell.

"Yes, fortunate, if the other party should be agreeable."

"Well, I hope she will, Mr. Bowles. I am sure you deserve a good wife, and I wish you success."

"Are you *sure* you do, Mrs. Tyrell," said the butler in rather a pointed manner, which caused her to look up from her employment at the speaker. He felt that this was the decisive moment ; he must speak now or never. "Suppose the person should be yourself, Mrs. Tyrell ?"

"Me !" she replied with unaffected surprise, as she stood with a saucepan in her hand. Then, gently setting it down, she said, "Pray, Mr. Bowles, do not say another word of that sort ; if you speak in jest, it is a foolish jest, and if in earnest, then it is a foolish thought."

"Bless my soul ! I do not make jokes of that sort," replied Bowles. "I never was more in earnest in all my life."

"Then I am very sorry," replied Tyrell. "I wish you *had* spoken in jest."

"Why so, Mrs. Tyrell ? There is no one I esteem and value as I do you. As for myself, I will say nothing ; you see what I am. I can offer you a good home, I know, and a good heart, I hope. I am not a man of gay or expensive habits ; I love my fireside, and wish to share it with you. I will say this much—I am a man whom you can depend upon, Mrs. Tyrell."

"I am sure you are," she replied ; "and with all my heart I thank you for your good opinion of me ; every woman ought to feel grateful to an honest-hearted man who makes her the offer you have made to me. I am grateful to you ; but that must be all. Think no more about it."

"But why ? Is there anything amiss with me ? Do you dislike me ? Do you think I could not make a woman happy ?"

"I have a great respect and regard for you, Mr. Bowles ; and I am sure you would make a very good husband ; but I never mean to marry."

"Not to marry ! Then you mean to be an old maid ?"

"Most people would call me one already," said Tyrell, smiling.

"I don't call you one," replied Bowles, getting quite animated ; "I think you are a charming and very elegant woman. If you were only dressed just a little better, you would beat the fine lady up-stairs, our mistress, all to nothing."

"I am afraid I shall never dress any better," replied Tyrell.

"Yes, but you will, if you will consent to be my wife. You shall never want for your handsome silk gown and bonnet, and all to match ; not gaudy, but neat and genteel, and of good materials. Come, Mrs. Tyrell, say a word of encouragement."

"I cannot, Mr. Bowles ; indeed, I cannot."

"Then it is the religion, I am thinking," said the butler after a short pause. "You are a Roman Catholic, and I am a Protestant ; but this need be no objection. Every one, I always say, has a right to enjoy his or her opinion. The Catholic religion is a very good one, I daresay. I have known very good Catholics in my time, and you're a good one, if any is. It can't be a bad religion, for the tree is known by its fruits. If so be we marry, and settle at the Wells—there's a Roman Catholic church there—I'd as soon, as like as not, take a sitting at it as at the parish church ; and you may depend anyhow that I should never interfere with your religion."

"Do let us drop the subject, Mr. Bowles ; it cannot be. I again repeat what I have already said, and can most solemnly assure you it is the truth. I have resolved *never*,

never to marry. I am sure you do not think I would tell an untruth, and on so serious a matter, too."

Her manner was so firm and conclusive, that Mr. Bowles could not but feel that the game was played out, and that he had failed. He heaved a sigh, and observed that all his hopes of happiness were dashed to the ground. He had no one to share his home with him; he was a desolate man. Poor Mr. Bowles was sincere in what he said. His disappointment was great, and something very like a tear stood in his big eye.

"Mr. Bowles," said Mrs. Tyrell kindly, "you need not be desolate, you must not be desolate. If you mean to leave service and settle, then you had much better seek a wife to cheer your home. There can be no difficulty in your finding one. You have thought of me because we have been thrown so much together, and you had marriage in your head already. It was not a preference for me that suggested to you the idea; it was because you were intending to marry, that you thought of me. Now, Mr. Bowles, is it not true that before we met you had resolved to marry?"

"Well, I cannot deny that it was in my head."

"Then," continued Tyrell, "you have only to throw yourself back into the state of mind you were in then, and act as you would have acted had I never come. Doubtless, you would have fixed your choice on some one else."

"Perhaps so; but it is not easy to be as if things had not been."

"But nothing really has been. What you have looked to was an impossibility from first to last. Now that you know this, a sensible man like you will turn to what is possible."

"And what *is* possible?" asked the disappointed suitor.

"Will you let me venture to give you some advice, Mr.

Bowles? It is meant in all kindness and friendship, and I think it is good advice."

"Whatever comes from you I shall value and respect."

"Well, then, did it never occur to you that Mrs. Roper would make you a good wife? She is a clever, managing woman. She is very cheerful, and would keep a home tidy and comfortable. I know that she highly respects and esteems you; and I am inclined to think, besides, that she would not be ill-disposed towards you, should you make advances to her. I am not in her confidence, certainly. If I were, I should be silent as to her sentiments. As it is, I only give you my impressions."

"Mrs. Tyrell, I can think of no one but you at present."

"But it is no use your thinking of me."

"And then, as to Mrs. Roper," he continued, "I know she has her merits, I am not blind to them; but it strikes me she is a little sharp and testy, and even ill-natured at times. I don't like that."

"Mrs. Roper is not an ill-tempered woman at all," said Tyrell; "neither is she an ill-natured one. I think you are hard upon her. Have you been quite the same to her lately? Mrs. Roper is sensitive, and I have observed—excuse me for saying so—that you have been rather tart to her sometimes. Perhaps she thinks you do not like her as well as you did; and, if it is as I say, this must pain her. You ought to be the last person in the world to find fault with that."

"Then you think Mrs. Roper likes me, do you?"

"I think she *would* like you, if you were to pay any serious attentions to her. Why should she not?"

"Why not, surely?" repeated Bowles, whose self-love was rather soothed by this question.

"I have sometimes thought," continued Tyrell, "from one or two expressions that have dropped from her, that she has felt hurt at your often sitting in the kitchen lately when she

was in the housekeeper's room, and there seemed no reason why you should not be there also when disengaged. I fancied that she suspected you did it to avoid her ; and, as the possibility of any other motive never crossed my mind, I must confess I was half inclined to think the same. Now, Mr. Bowles, do just reflect : if Mrs. Roper is favourably disposed towards you, or has only warm feelings of friendship and regard, she would naturally be greatly mortified and pained by behaviour of this sort. Surely, this consideration will go far to excuse any slight inequality of temper. Wounded feelings, debarred from expressing themselves, will take that form. We are such weak creatures, you see ; and this is a weakness which you, at least, may well pardon."

"Dear me !" said Bowles, who was both a vain and a tender-hearted man. The last shot had evidently told upon him, but what he was going to say I know not ; for a ring at the area bell announced M. Pattin's arrival.

Such, then, was Mrs. Tyrell's revenge ; for she never for a moment doubted but that it was Mrs. Roper who had repeated, with more or less distortion and exaggeration, the conversation in the servants' hall which had led to her dismissal. Yet she had not judged her harshly, or condemned her severely. Tyrell was not one of those who from one wrong act argue a habit of committing it ; and she had spoken sincerely when she said that Mrs. Roper was not an ill-natured person. They had always been good friends, and why in the present instance she should have been induced to act in an unkind manner Tyrell knew not, and had not cared to inquire ; but when Mr. Bowles made her the unexpected offer, the truth flashed upon her. Having previously observed indications of liking on Roper's part, she now saw that she had spoken under the influence of irritation caused by jealousy and the disappointment of her hopes. Tyrell, accordingly, experienced nothing but the sincerest pity for all the poor woman must have

suffered, and a desire to repair the mischief of which she had herself been the unconscious occasion.

In the meantime the unhappy Roper, having done all she could, short of avowing the real truth, to remove the evil impression made on Mrs. Wyndham's mind, resolved to attempt something, with the same reserve, in the way of excuse to her injured fellow-servant. "Mrs. Tyrell," she said, having found her alone, "I have been fretting so much—you cannot think how much—lest you should fancy I had played you an ill turn. My lady *did* question me so, I scarce knew what I said—I mean about the play and what you thought about play-going; and I certainly said, God forgive me! that you did not think play-going right; and, you see, my lady goes very often, so she took the blame to herself." Of course here was a fresh piece of misrepresentation, still this time the poor creature was not actuated by malice, but partly by an anxiety to exculpate herself and partly by the desire of confessing a portion of her fault; and some credit was due to her, small as it was, for this desire, for she need not have taken the *onus* of tale-bearing on herself. The tears were in her eyes as she made this incoherent speech.

Tyrell pitied her from her heart, and kindly took her hand. "Dear Mrs. Roper," she said, "do not distress yourself on my account. I should have been content to stay, and I am content to go. Whatever pleases God, pleases me. I have not been taken by surprise, I assure you; for I expected to receive warning before long, when I saw how much my mistress was annoyed the other day. That was before a word had been said by you or by any one else."

"I shall probably also leave," said Roper, "before we return to London. I cannot face another season; it tells upon me."

"Mr. Bowles seems unsettled, too," replied Tyrell.

"Indeed!" said Roper; "did he tell you so?"

"He spoke of retiring from service altogether ; I fancy he has wherewithal to do so comfortably."

"I believe he has." Then there was a pause. Roper wondered what Tyrell was going to say next. Was it possible that she was paving the way to the confession of an engagement ? She was soon relieved on that score.

"Mr. Bowles," said Tyrell, "is a very good sort of man. I have sometimes wished that you two might see your way to an agreement. I do not think you could either of you do better."

"Law ! Mrs. Tyrell," exclaimed Roper, "what ever put such an idea into your head ? Mr. Bowles will not think of me—not now, for certain. Mr. Bowles is a changed man."

"I am not so sure that he might not think of you. Dear Mrs. Roper, you will excuse the liberty I am taking—if I were not going so soon, I should not have ventured upon such a remark—but I must just say that, if you think you could be happy with Mr. Bowles, and I don't know why you should not, I am of opinion that the matter rests a great deal with yourself. You think Mr. Bowles changed, but it is just possible that he may think *you* so. Mr. Bowles is a man who likes to be comfortable, you know ; and I fancy, if he liked a woman ever so much, he would give her up if he suspected her temper was not quite even. I am sure you are not ill-tempered at all, but I have seen you a little sharp in your manner sometimes in his presence, and your face not looking as bright as it can look—not, in short, doing you justice. Anything of this nature would tend to estrange him. Please excuse me, and take what I have said in good part—I am wanted now."

Tyrell did not wish for an answer, and Roper would have been embarrassed to find one. The comfort she had received, however, was very great. She was made aware that Tyrell put the mildest construction on what had occurred, while her hopes of securing Mr. Bowles's affections were revived ;

may, she began to imagine that it was through her own unfounded jealousy that he had been partially alienated from her. She would follow the advice given her.

Certainly, this was the first time that Mrs. Tyrell had attempted to make a match; prompted thereto partly by the generosity of her forgiving heart, and partly by the desire to make two people happy. I think that her pious manœuvre was successful, and have reason to believe that Mrs. Roper, now Mrs. Bowles, was settled comfortably at the Wells before another year had elapsed, with the stationery shop prospering, and a "quiet lodger" on the drawing-room floor.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

DISCOMFORTS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS.

ON the Friday morning Mrs. Wyndham's mind had resumed its habitual equilibrium. She and her two girls had been out on the Thursday night. Emma had, to all appearance, enjoyed her ball as much as ever, and had danced a great deal. A certain Lord Tyndrum had begged to be introduced, and had paid her most marked attentions, which the young lady had received as she usually received such things in their beginnings—not ungraciously, but as matters of course. Lord Tyndrum was the owner of many miles of moorland and mountain in the Highlands. He had just come of age, his father was dead, and he was reckoned a good *parti*. He was tall, but did not very well know how to manage his height. He was, however, presentable in point of looks, with a good-natured but not very intellectual countenance. Of course Lord Tyndrum had a card

of invitation for the *soirée dansante* at Mrs. Wyndham's. She, poor woman, observing that her daughter did not mope after her lost lover, but accommodated herself very gaily with what came to hand, began to flatter herself that the preference for Captain Baines had nothing after all very alarming in it. All fish were welcome to Emma's net—that had always been her own opinion. Now she began almost to regret the necessity of so soon removing from London, particularly as there was a new admirer on the scene, who appeared really in earnest, and to whom no objection could be raised. There was still a week remaining, however. Much might be done in that time; Lord Tyndrum was young, and had not learnt caution. He was evidently greatly smitten, and would move fast. So all things looked propitious. Perhaps Parliament would not be dissolved, and Spanish bonds, it was to be hoped, would rise. Mrs. Wyndham was a woman of elastic spirit.

"That Scotch laird," Gertrude said to her sister, as they were going to bed after the ball, "paid you great attention."

"Yes, I never knew any one make such furious love on such short notice. One can see he is very green."

"But you did not seem to dislike it?"

"Why should I? It was very amusing for once in a way."

"They say he is rich," remarked Gertrude.

"He may be as rich as he or any one else could wish, for aught I care," rejoined her sister. "I am not going to marry Lord Tyndrum."

"I did not suppose you were."

"I would not pick him up with the tongs, even if I cared for no one else."

"I am sure, Emma, I do not want you to marry him; but I do not know why you should speak so contemptuously of the poor young man."

"Of the *rich* young man, you mean. If he was a poor man, people would not look at him ; and, if they did, they would say he was a *gauk*. Besides, he is a regular muff."

"I never can quite make out what a muff means," rejoined Gertrude.

"Then I certainly cannot explain the word. You are rather muffy yourself, Gertrude, I think."

Poor Gertrude ! She was muffy ! That was all she had got in return for having, in her unreasoning love for this sister of hers, been guilty, for her sake, of a gross equivocation.

And now the reader may perhaps be curious to know what were Emma's plans. Had she any ? We have seen that she was resolved to have her own way. She meant to marry Captain Baines, whatever father, mother, or brother might say or do ; did she, then, propose to elope with him ? No ; Emma had no such intention. Though she cannot be said to have been well brought up, yet there are few girls who have enjoyed even a moderate degree of good rearing but recoil, at least in the first instance, from the idea of a positive elopement. Emma also, although deficient in warmth of heart and tenderness, was not altogether heartless ; and, although she certainly did not love her parents very passionately, nevertheless she did love them in her way, particularly her mother, who had been so uniformly indulgent to her. She would have shrunk accordingly from dealing so cruel a blow to their feelings as an elopement would inflict. She was prepared, indeed, to go against their wishes, but not in that manner. Emma was now near upon twenty ; in little more than a year she would be of age, and, consequently, her own mistress. When that time came, she would marry her lover, in despite of all opposition. True, she would probably not obtain the consent of her parents, and would have to walk out of her father's house against his declared will, but this she could do in the face of day, and

without concealment. No doubt, some friend's door would be open to her, from whose house she could be married. This was Emma's plan, which she meant on the first opportunity to communicate to the object of her affections. A year had to be got through, a long year, but Emma had inherited her mother's spirit, and was determined to face her difficulties and annoyances bravely. She had settled in her own mind that the most prudent course was to allow all suspicions and anxieties to subside ; she would be cheerful as usual. At the time that she contemplated different tactics, it was with a view to the extorting a consent, then not a desperate hope ; but now things were changed. If her mother and brother should see that she was unhappy, they would know the cause, and, in order to cure her of her love, would be raking up every manner of accusation against Captain Baines, and collecting every report they could pick up to his disadvantage. She did not want to hear such reports. She did not believe them, whatever they might be, and she did not wish her family to know that she had heard them, for, as a matter of course, *they* would believe them. Besides, who could tell what precautions might be adopted to keep her and her lover asunder ! No, she would keep her own counsel till she struck twenty-one, and then she would act for herself.

The house on Friday was redolent of the fumes of preparation. "I feel," said Emma, "as if I was absorbing the essence of mock turtle at every pore."

"It is because they will *not* keep that door shut," said Mrs. Wyndham ; "and I have spoken about it so often."

"It is deliberately hooked back, I declare," cried Emma, unfastening and shutting the door at the top of the kitchen stairs.

"What is that enormous thing in the hall ?" asked her mother.

"That must be Mr. Devereux's violoncello," replied

Emma. "He said he would send it to-day. I hope Minny will not forget the music-books."

Mrs. Wyndham was now thoroughly in her element again. Never was she so proud or so happy as when receiving company or preparing for that grand object. Her rooms were good and sufficiently large for the purpose of entertainment. They also showed to advantage on such occasions, as there were several mirrors in the drawing-rooms, the papering of which lighted up singularly well ; but, above all, she had two pretty daughters and a handsome son. Surrounded with so charming a family, and, as she flattered herself—and not, indeed, without cause—still possessing in her own person a considerable amount of matronly beauty, an evening such as she was now anticipating, notwithstanding all its accompanying anxieties and perturbations, was a kind of triumph ; it was a bright spot in life's path. This bright spot had been overshadowed by the cloud which Emma's love affair had raised, but now the apprehensions on that score were nearly dispelled, and the sun was peeping out again. Mrs. Wyndham was one who enjoyed her pleasures thoroughly, and with a zest rare save in early youth, and she was proportionately annoyed when anything came to mar them. Relieved with regard to her daughter, she endeavoured also to dismiss the unpleasant reflections connected with impending elections and depreciated Spanish bonds, and to throw herself heart and soul into the gaiety of the present. But then—there is always a "but then" in these cases ; there is always a Mardochai at the gate in some shape or other. Mrs. Wyndham's Mardochai was her brother John. His, to her, afflicting presence at the coming festivity had been almost forgotten under the pressure of serious uneasiness ; now it rose up before her again to poison her satisfaction. Emma had made the most fuss about this imaginary grievance, but Mrs. Wyndham had felt it really the most. Emma cordially disliked her

uncle, and consoled herself, or had consoled herself up to the time when the brooch was presented to her, by quizzing and abusing him unmercifully in his absence ; but Mrs. Wyndham, though she disliked her brother's visit, and, above all, abhorred the necessity of displaying him before her fashionable friends, could not be said to dislike him personally, and lacked, therefore, this consolation, such as it was. After all, as she said, he *was* her brother, and the sense of this near relationship gave her a consciousness of solidarity with him, which increased the bitterness of her mortification. It could therefore afford her no relief to ridicule him, or hear him ridiculed ; we have seen, indeed, that Emma's observations, completely as they expressed her own feelings, were even painful to her. Emma, however, was now grown comparatively quiet on the subject, partly because she feared to appear ungrateful for her present, but still more because her mind was filled with her own all-absorbing secret. Perhaps Mrs. Wyndham fretted the more now against this annoyance because her daughter had apparently grown more indifferent to it.

"What Baines is this?" asked Mr. Wyndham, as they all sat at breakfast together on the Saturday morning,—he, as usual, having his newspaper accompaniment in hand—"Everard Baines, of Tetherby Hall, Yorkshire, who is just dead? Is that any relation of the chap with the black whiskers who is to dine here to-day?"

"He does not dine with us," answered his wife ; "a telegram called him into Yorkshire. I suppose that is his uncle, and that he was sent for."

John Sanders meanwhile, who was in the act of conveying a spoonful of egg to his mouth, stayed it on its passage, and, fixing his eyes on Wyndham, looked as if he were about to speak. Now, his sister had entreated him not to say a word of the unfortunate affair at Palermo or of Captain Baines's disreputable character to her husband, on the plea

of his extreme sensitiveness on such points. The same reason had been alleged with regard to Emma. "The poor child would feel so intensely mortified," she had said, "at having been a frequent partner in the dance with a cheat at cards." If Emma was not to be told, neither, of course, was Gertrude. "I will take an opportunity to break it to them all by-and-by," Mrs. Wyndham had said. Her brother John thought all these precautions very absurd, but he acquiesced after a fashion, and said he would be silent unless forced to speak out. What might John consider as sufficient provocation to render speaking irresistible? There was no saying. It was very difficult to gag her brother—this she knew, and was therefore under considerable alarm.

"He has died suddenly of apoplexy," continued her husband; "how many men die of that complaint now-a-days! 'It is believed that his nephew, Mr. Randall Baines, of Hammerbridge, will inherit the property.' Is that your friend?"

"I think not, but I am sure I do not recollect what he signed himself," replied his wife. By this time poor Mrs. Wyndham did not well know whether she was on her head or her heels. Emma was scarlet, and Gertrude nearly as red as her sister, but John, who had swallowed his mouthful of egg, as much at least as had not remained at the corners of his mouth, was still looking steadfastly at his brother-in-law, and would certainly say something, she was sure, if she did not administer a sharpish reminder. She was sitting next him, so quietly placed her foot on his and pressed it.

"Holloa! Betty; what *are* you about?" almost shouted her brother; "that is my worst corn."

"I really beg your pardon, John, but I had a kind of cramp in my foot; I am seized with it sometimes when I have had to stand a great deal."

"Then, please, warn me another time when one of these fits is likely to come on," replied her brother. "I shall be

as lame as a tree this evening. Emma and I were going to lead off the ball together—didn't you know that?"

"What the deuce is the matter?" said Wyndham, laying down his paper.

"Nothing is the matter," answered Mrs. Wyndham. "John, your face is all over egg,"—this was by the way, and Sanders proceeded to wipe his face with his napkin. "Did I tell you, Percy," she said, again turning to her husband, "that the haunch of venison from Chiseldon arrived yesterday?" She knew very well she had told him, but a diversion of the conversation was imperative.

"Yes, you told me. Don't you remember I said I hoped it was not too fresh?"

"To be sure, I do now. I hear it is in prime condition for cooking;" and so the Baines incident passed over.

But it had given Emma enough to think about. That was her lover's uncle, sure enough, but it must certainly be an error about Mr. Randall Baines of Hammerbridge. She had never heard of this man. Of course her Frederick must be the heir; and no one, after all, could know anything to the contrary, for the will as yet would not have been opened, and he was considered by everybody to occupy the position of a son to this old gentleman: so he had told her, at least, and he was everybody to her. Nevertheless she felt uncomfortable. Old gentlemen sometimes change their minds and disappoint their expectant heir. The newspaper, indeed, mentioned another nephew as the expected heir; there was a confusion, of course—she knew better. Still it must be owned that Emma was uncomfortable.

Annoyances seldom come singly. As they were about to rise from table, a flat parcel and note were handed to Miss Wyndham by James, who informed her that Miss Vincent's servant was waiting for an answer. "Those are the music books," observed Emma; "you can take them up to the drawing-room, James. What can Minny have

to say?" and she opened her note. "Oh, Mama, how provoking! Mr. Devereux cannot come; what are we to do?"

"My dear Emma,

"I am sorry to say my cousin was seized with a bad sore throat yesterday evening, and was so ill in the night that the doctor was sent for early this morning, and he says it is diphtheria. Of course he cannot keep his engagement either to the dinner or the party, and you would not desire to have him if he could. I have sent the violoncello accompaniment, however, in the forlorn hope of catching a performer. You had better try also, but I fear it is quite too late in the day. Those who *can* play that instrument, and there are not many, dislike doing so before company without a previous rehearsal. It is quite a misfortune, but we must jingle away with the other two instruments as brilliantly as we can. The harp I will send in the course of the afternoon."

"The loss of the violoncello performer is irreparable, Mama," said Emma.

"And there will be the gap at the dinner table, too," replied her mother.

"We seem doomed to have a Banquo's seat," observed Mr. Wyndham.

"We need not have that; Gertrude had better dine with us," replied his wife. "Nothing is so bad as an empty place."

"Not even you, Gertrude," said her uncle; "you are just a degree better, or less bad, than nothing."

"I wish I was worse than nothing," replied his niece. "I do dislike dining with this party so much."

"We can't always do what we like, my dear," said her father.

"Now I must be off somewhere and everywhere, to beat

up for a recruit," said Emma, who had been scribbling a few hurried lines to her friend. "I can have the brougham, I suppose, Mama ; indeed I cannot do without it."

"Really I can ill spare *you*," said her mother ; "and James is certainly wanted."

"I will manage without James ; I can open the brougham myself."

"That will never do, Emma ; I should not like the appearance of such a thing at all."

"It is now that we miss the 'buttons,' Mama. But what is James wanted for so much ? The men are coming to take up the carpet, and they will move the furniture. Besides, I shall not be long, for I want to get back." As usual, Emma had her way, and the brougham was ordered.

"I don't think this looks very hard," said Uncle John to Gertrude, when they had gone up to the drawing-room. He was turning over the leaves of one of the music books, occasionally moistening his forefinger to aid the operation, as poor children do with their lesson books. Gertrude was glad no one witnessed this proceeding except herself ; not but that it was rather disagreeable to her, and had she known her uncle a little longer, she would have taken courage to remonstrate.

"What do you mean ?"

"I mean the violoncello accompaniment. It is plain sailing enough. Upon a pinch, I think I could manage it, even though I should play it at sight."

"Then you play the violoncello, uncle ? I did not know that."

"No more than you knew that I had read Tasso. What a lout of a fellow I must look !"

"I did not mean any such thing, I am sure, uncle. Only so few people can play the violoncello, and so few men can play anything."

"You see, I am one of the few ; but I am not at all

anxious to display my powers. Let us see if Emma or her friend can catch a performer. If they cannot, then I will step forward to the rescue, if you think they will accept me."

"Accept you! I should think they would indeed, and be thankful."

"But keep it to yourself, my little woman. I like surprises, and wish to make myself as valuable as I can by the help of one. To be sure, what a state this room is in!"

"There will be nothing like comfort all day long," said Gertrude. "As for me, I am tired already. But Mama and Emma enjoy the bustle. I wish we were at Palermo, uncle."

"Ah! we would be jolly—would we not? No taking up carpets there, if you have a mind for a hop, for we never have any down. I have a villa outside the town at the foot of Monte Pellegrino—that is our Saint's mountain—and with a glorious view of the blue sea. I think it would please you, Gertrude. And the flowers! Sicily is the garden of the world for flowers, certainly. And the air—that delicious air! You live twice over in one day in that heavenly climate. I am getting as stuffy in my chest here as an asthmatic grampus, if there is such an animal! Well, I must go out now to get a mouthful of carbonated oxygen."



CHAPTER XXXV.

THE DINNER PARTY.

It was rather difficult to account for the species of position which Sir Philip Eagle had won for himself, and for the privileges and immunities which he enjoyed, in a certain

circle of his own. Personally he was far from attractive. He was rather tall, but lost the advantage of his height from a habit of poking, apparently caused by his short sight. He was always lowering his head a little to meet his hand and eye-glass, that is when the glass itself was not detained in its place by a certain contraction of the facial nerves, a faculty possessed by some short-sighted persons, which, if a convenient one, certainly does not contribute to their beauty. Sir Philip had a hooked nose, rather round and lack-lustre eyes, of which the stare was peculiarly unpleasant, a luxuriant growth of grey whiskers, and a slightly projecting stomach. Such was Sir Philip Eagle's outward man. He was of good family, and had an ample fortune ; but neither rank nor riches in his case were such as to account satisfactorily for the prestige which surrounded him or the practical value in which he was socially held. He was a man who in one way was liberal : he never bargained where it was a question of worldly ease or of what he regarded as enjoyment ; he paid his tradesmen regularly, and gave his servants high wages. It was said—with what truth I know not—that his cook had a hundred a year, but I am not aware that many acts of charity or generous kindness could be recorded of him. He had done little apparently to earn the love of any single individual, and perhaps no one did exactly love him ; nevertheless, he was well received, his company was often coveted and solicited, and, to crown all, he enjoyed the privilege of being both rude and disagreeable unrebuked, and an astonishing immunity even from the censure which would appear to be necessarily entailed by such conduct. Sir Philip's rudeness and disagreeableness were received and admitted as facts, just as the trunk or tusks of an elephant might be. You do not wish to come in contact with either, but the animal who owns them is considered a noble beast, if only for his size, and for his possession of these weapons, and you exhibit and parade him with a

certain deference and respect. Sir Philip was exhibited and paraded in like manner, for he was not merely tolerated, but courted in a way. Neither was it his good dinners which brought him these attentions, for he gave very few dinners, and asked a very limited number of intimates to his table. Many persons were glad to see him at their own tables who had no expectation that the compliment would be repaid. Sir Philip, indeed, did not profess to repay such or any compliments. He lived for himself, and did not like entertaining—in short, he made no secret that perfect selfishness was his rule of life.

And why *was* such a man tolerated? Why was he allowed to offend against the courtesies of society and be ill-mannered at his pleasure? I do not know. The only reply that can be made, I suppose, is that some persons seem to have the gift of thus domineering over others and impressing them with a certain social awe; and, when they happen to be well-off in point of position and worldly wealth the gift is, of course, rendered more prominent and effective; but I am of opinion that, after all, it *is* a gift. Never was there a truer saying than that one man can steal a horse, and another may not look over the hedge. Sir Philip was the man who could steal the horse, and not incur so much as a remonstrance. But why should Mr. Wyndham value this man so highly? This is almost as difficult to explain as the individual's own success, but the most obvious reason would appear to have been the inordinate value which our friend set on good appointments and a good table—a value which led him to treat the great gastronome as a sort of god. Not that he was himself either a glutton or an epicure, though, having a bad stomach, he was rather hard to please; but such was his hobby, or, rather, one of his hobbies. To get into public life and to give good dinners were Mr. Wyndham's two hobbies. In neither had he been eminently successful. He had not attained to office, and his elections

had cost him so much that he had never been able,—at least, so his economical wife had judged—to keep a first-rate cook.

To-day, however, as he believed, and as Mrs. Wyndham liked to believe, a first-rate artist had been secured to honour and win the approbation of the distinguished guest. For Sir Philip Eagle was not simply one of the guests ; the whole party was selected with a view to him (always excepting that black sheep, Mr. Jardine, who was an after-thought), and certainly, except with such a view, a duller and less attractive set could scarcely have been got together. So it seemed to Emma as she glanced round the table after they had sat down. Mr. Wyndham had muttered grace in rather a lower tone than usual, for he was not quite sure that Sir Philip was in the habit of giving any thanks for the good things he so intensely relished ; and he undoubtedly omitted the sign of the cross, a fact which John Sanders observed, and made his own accordingly in a specially demonstrative manner. Mrs. Wyndham saw this out of the corner of her bright eye, which nothing round the table ever escaped, and hoped that it was not the beginning of distressing singularities. Why must her very ordinary brother be always thus obtruding himself on notice ? He was not a vain man, and, had he been so, prudence might have led him to keep in the background when in polite society. But so it was : John Sanders never did keep well in the background, and there was no chance of his escaping observation. He had not on this occasion escaped the observation of Sir Philip's goggle eye, which, she saw, had noticed the evolution.

“ We have had several disappointments, Sir Philip,” said Mr. Wyndham, addressing his guest from the other end of the table. “ Besides the first melancholy failure, one gentleman whom we asked was summoned to a dying uncle ; a second is all but, not quite, I hope, dying of diphtheria ; so we had to fill up the vacant places with another of my young

ladies, which makes the feminine as well as the family element predominate more than I had intended ; I knew your dislike to lady dinner-parties. We are six to four, however."

"I see only three feminine individuals here," said Sir Philip. "My friend Lady Mordaunt does not count. She is not feminine at all."

"How so?"

"She lacks all feminine attributes, I am sorry to say, as I have reason to know. She is my adversary at whist, and a most pitiless one. You ought to see her crowing and gloating over her gains."

"I have no pity on *you*, certainly, Sir Philip," said the lady ; "you are a regular cormorant. And as for not being feminine, that does not trouble me. It is a fine thing, I suppose, to be a woman of a masculine mind."

"Of a masculine understanding, I grant you ; but I never said you had *that*. I never said you were masculine even."

"I hope not," said Mrs. Wyndham ; "it is a horrible epithet to apply to a lady."

"My dowager has not spirit enough to deserve it. She has no fortitude, and does not know how to lose at cards with any better grace than she wins. Look at me and Abinger when we lose—that is the test of masculine fortitude—why, we are as mute as horses which have tumbled down and lie sprawling in the ditch. Horses are noble animals, but our good lady there squeaks like a pig which is having its throat cut. What is this?" The question was addressed to the servant who placed his soup before him.

"Mock turtle, Sir Philip."

"Better than real turtle, if good ; but it seldom is. As for young ladies smelling of bread and butter," he continued, levelling his eye-glass at poor Gertrude, "I am rather of Lord Byron's opinion—they are somewhat insipid, present company always excepted."

"It is better to smell of bread and butter than of smoke and snuff, I should think, any day," said Emma, who could not restrain her indignation. Gertrude, of course, was quite unable to take her own part.

"Bravo ! Emma," exclaimed her uncle. "I second that opinion. *Viva* the young ladies, and the bread and butter, too !"

"Who smells snuffy, Miss Wyndham ?" said Sir Philip. "She must mean you, Poole." The toady was sitting next to Emma.

"That is really too bad, Sir Philip," said the injured little man. "I never smoke, nor have I ever kept a snuff-box in my pocket in my whole life."

"No, I daresay not ; but that is because you find it more convenient to have your finger in every one else's box. Your neighbour there is well known for that trick at his club, Miss Wyndham. He is, besides, supposed to keep a private canister of cheap snuff for home consumption, when he cannot get the superior provision from his friends."

"Not a syllable of truth, I protest."

"Now I am the last to complain of snuff-taking," continued Sir Philip, "and am not remarkable for my self-denying turn, but I always take care to abstain almost entirely from the indulgence when I am going out to dinner, from the time when I dress. After dinner I take it freely ; noses are grown callous by that time. But I say it is a shame for a man to go out stinking like a polecat, and take a charming young lady's appetite away by sticking himself in her pocket."

Mr. Poole laughed at Sir Philip's coarse jest, as heartily as if he had not been its object, and, turning to Emma, cheerfully observed that Sir Philip was in particularly good humour that evening.

"Indeed !" replied that young lady ; "and what is he like when out of humour ?"

"Like the very deuce," said her other neighbour, Mr. Abinger, who had overheard the query. Mr. Abinger was a palsy man with a red face and an inappreciable length of throat. His very appearance bespoke a threat of apoplexy, if that malady has really, as believed, any connection with short throats. He spoke little and, when he did speak, his voice was gruff, and seemed to proceed from an interior kind of cellar.

Truly, the company was not of an engaging character. Mr. Jardine sat opposite Emma. He had taken in the unwilling Gertrude, who did not like him, and answered him, when he addressed her, in monosyllables. Accordingly, what with Gertrude on one side, who would not be tempted into anything like conversation, and Lady Mordaunt, who, it must be owned, much resembled Emma's description, on the other, and whom he did not himself feel disposed to cultivate, poor Mr. Jardine was rather ill-off. No one seemed to notice him. Sir Philip perfectly ignored him; indeed, Mrs. Wyndham had cleverly shirked the ceremony of an introduction; she herself had been stiff and formal to him, and Mr. Wyndham, except when his eye chanced to rest on him, almost forgot his presence. With his host Mr. Jardine was a mere stopgap, and, besides, belonged to the ladies. Poor man! he appeared to belong to no one in that circle, and, whether it were from a sense of isolation or that he had something on his mind, he had a distressed and uncomfortable air about him. Yet to one person he was an object of considerable interest—that person was Emma; she noted the expression of his countenance, and wondered if he had any communication in store for her, and what it might be. At the same time Mr. Jardine was an unpleasant object even to her; the necessities of her position had alone forced her to accept or tolerate him as a kind of intermediary between herself and her lover, but the habits, if not the principles, of the young lady, made the necessity a

distasteful one. There was no help for it, however, and he was the only person to whom she could look for any information touching the Yorkshire uncle's testamentary dispositions. He would probably volunteer some information in the course of the evening.

Apparently Sir Philip did not reckon the mock turtle set before him as superior to real, and left his plate unfinished. Mrs. Wyndham, of course, observed the circumstance, but hoped that it had escaped the notice of her husband. Then followed the fish; Sir Philip had some salmon, and nearly finished it, which was more satisfactory. As yet there was very little conversation round the table, although Mrs. Wyndham exerted herself to promote it, and that lady was reckoned remarkably successful in imparting liveliness to a dinner party; nevertheless, on this occasion it was very up-hill work, for the materials were bad. Sir Philip fired an occasional shot at either his toady or his butt, and Mr. Wyndham tried to get up some political talk with Mr. Abinger, but without any very animated results.

"What is this?" asked Sir Philip, when one of the *entrées* was presented to him. "I have the weakness to like to know what I am going to eat."

"Cutlets," replied the servant.

"*Côtelettes à la Ste. Ménéhould*," said Mrs. Wyndham, consulting the *carte* which lay beside her.

"One of old Soyer's receipts, I suppose," muttered the gastronome half audibly; and the anxious hostess thought she observed a shade of doubt and incipient contempt pass over his countenance.

She was not wrong. Sir Philip turned his cutlet over and over, tasted a mouthful, then laid down his knife and fork, and allowed his plate to be removed. Alas! alas! the cutlets were evidently a failure. The next *entrée* was declined with scarce a glance, and then Mrs. Wyndham, in despair, modestly suggested the venison on the side-table.

It was accepted, much to her relief, as her husband would have been sure soon to observe the empty plate and disengaged condition of the revered epicure. And, what was better still, Sir Philip liked the venison, and expressed his liking by graciously informing his host of the fact. "This venison," he said, "is admirably cooked, and melts in your mouth." So far, so good; but, after all, thought Mrs. Wyndham to herself, the venison was cooked by Tyrell. The *entrées* were M. Pattin's, and they had been practically condemned. Poor Mrs. Wyndham had some difficulty in keeping up her spirits.

"I knew," said Mr. Poole to Emma, "that Sir Philip had got something he relished now. I saw that directly, from the way he handled his knife and fork."

"The happy circumstance had better be telegraphed immediately to all the different gastronomic clubs in Europe," said Emma.

"Well, that is a very funny idea, Miss Wyndham. It would have made Sir Philip laugh."

Sanders, who overheard Emma's remark—Uncle John's ears were very sharp—never felt so much pleased with his niece as he did that moment, and endeavoured to repeat the joke in a whisper to Gertrude, who, to her great satisfaction, had got next him, but she was too bewildered to catch his meaning.

Evidently it was a very dull dinner party, and likely to become more so, as the dispiriting truth should dawn upon the individuals composing it. It had already dawned upon Sanders, who disliked dulness, and who thought that for the credit of the family an attempt ought to be made to relieve it. He believed the chief cause to lie in the fact that Sir Philip had no one to keep up the ball with him. The toady and the butt were mere targets. Mr. Abinger was good for nothing but to eat his dinner and hold a hand at whist. Mrs. Wyndham was half afraid of her guest, and

still more possessed with the fear that her husband would be disappointed ; while Wyndham himself was not a lively man at his own table, nor, indeed, anywhere else. The lively element, the defunct Graham, was, in fact, wanting. *He* could have bandied jokes with Eagle, and given as good again in the way of retorts. So Sanders thought he would tackle Sir Philip himself, and make some stir at the table. As a preliminary he asked him to take a glass of wine, which was judged to be a most unnecessary proceeding by his sister. Was not the wine being carried round from time to time as a matter of course ? But John *must* put himself forward ; and, moreover, she feared (with truth) that this move on her brother's part was but the prelude to a further display of himself.

"With all my heart !" responded Sir Philip. "I like the old fashion of hob-nobbing, which is going out under the influence of perambulating bottles, thrust under your nose in season and out of season. What wine will you take, Mr. Sanders ?"

"I stick to my Marsala. You must know, Sir Philip, that I make Marsala, and sell Marsala, and drink Marsala ; what more can a man do by his wares than that ?"

"You do your duty by them, it must be allowed. I never was myself a great consumer of Marsala. It is neither the one thing nor the other. It has not the refreshing lightness of French and Rhine wines, nor has it the body of port and sherry. To me it is poor sherry, and a mere betwixt and between."

"Betwixts and betweenes are very good things when they fill up a gap," said Sanders. "Now just try some of this wine, Sir Philip. I shall be glad to have the opinion of so good a judge of these matters ; and if you can suggest anything which would be an improvement, I shall be glad to know. I am always glad to get a fresh wrinkle."

A wrinkle ! O the horrible expression ! Mrs. Wyndham positively writhed under it, and her eye instinctively wandered to her daughter Emma, but that young lady did not seem to be attending. She might have spared herself all her misery ; Sir Philip did not care the least about the polish of his company. He even affected a want of polish himself, though in him the defect was not owing to ignorance, as it was in the case of John Sanders ; he knew very well what were the manners and the refinement of the great world, and, if he sinned against them, he did it wilfully, because such was his pleasure. And more than this : he often deliberately failed in courtesy, a fault of which Mrs. Wyndham's brother was never guilty. She saw all this in a way, but then the very fact that Sir Philip uttered vulgarities, and even coarse remarks, intentionally, made all the difference in her eyes. It was "natural vulgarity," as she considered it, which was offensive. The same word or phrase which in one man's mouth was disgusting was mere sport in that of another ; and the individual who used it in jest could very well detect that the other man used it in his uncultivated ignorance. So Mrs. Wyndham knew that Sir Philip, for all his own unmannered licence of tongue and behaviour, would rate at their just value any solecisms into which her brother might fall. He would know that he was a vulgar man, as surely as he knew that the *côtelettes à la Ste. Ménéhould* were not dressed by a first-rate cook.

"Well, this is a capital wine, I must confess," said Sir Philip, sipping his Marsala. "I never tasted Marsala like this before, though I have drunk it in Sicily at the fountain head."

"You may get it very bad in Sicily," said Sanders.

"And this is your own ?"

"Yes, what I send my brother-in-law is all straight from my own wine cellars—goes through no dealer's hands.

I mistrust your dealers. Bless your soul ! the trade would adulterate water if it paid to do so."

"That they would," replied Sir Philip. "Every man for himself in this world. As for me, I never grudge spending to procure the best to be had of meats and drinks, but there is one thing money cannot always do, much as it can do, and that is, secure you the genuine article. There is often not such a thing in the market. Does any man flatter himself he has ever drunk a glass of port or sherry that has not been doctored ? The word is rather a good one, by the way, as applied to sherry. Those professional knaves, the doctors—there are no greater knaves than the doctors—took to praising sherry many years ago now. It was a good stomachic, they said. Their verdict went forth, and not only their patients, but everybody, sick or well, began drinking sherry, and the demand became so great that it very soon spoiled the sherry and made it unwholesome. Those fellows did the same with malt liquor. You cannot get a glass now of genuine racy old English ale, thanks to their recommendations of bitter beer !"

"The Sicilians adulterate their Marsala with their execrable brandy," said Sanders.

"As for the mixing brandy with wine," said Sir Philip, "I believe I am right in saying that foreign wines are always thus treated for the English market ; and it has so corrupted the palate here that, except among your chosen few, all relish for pure wine is gone."

"Very true," rejoined Sanders. "Even Bordeaux is doctored with brandy for our benefit, the very best containing six per cent. of spirit of wine. It is called the *travaillage à l'Anglaise*."

"Capital !" replied Eagle.

"However, as respects Italian wines," continued Sanders, "there are other faults not resulting from adulteration ; for, if you except Sicilian wines, much is not exported. The

indigenous wines are the beverage of the country, and, if they content the population which consumes them, there is nothing much to encourage improvement. The vines are often planted in most uncongenial soil, and are allowed to run wildly about, wasting their vitality in wood and leaves. But, even when reared on poles, like our hops, you will find that they are seldom trained or pruned. Of course there are exceptions. You may drink excellent wine in Italy, but it is chiefly that raised and manufactured by some landholders for their own consumption."

"And what of the manufacture in a general way?"

"Ah, that's the worst part of the job. It is enough to turn your stomach to see the grapes after being trodden—not a very tempting sight in itself—thrown together without any sorting, bad and good, ripe and unripe, into vats which have never been cleaned since the last year's vintage."

"Don't they use a press?"

"Very seldom. And then the fermentation goes on as best it may—the system is most careless, or, rather, there is no system. Why, in France they will not suffer more than the pressure of one day's gathering to ferment together, but in Italy and Sicily—it's all the same—they will throw in fresh pressings in the height of the process."

"Incredible!"

"It is only wonderful the wine turned out should be as drinkable as it is. When I saw all this I said to myself, that with only tolerable care, and with such a soil, such a sun, and such a climate, very superior wines ought to be produced. So, as soon as my circumstances allowed of the experiment, I set to work to manufacture according to my own ideas; and, when I had scraped a little money together, I bought a *vigna* and cultivated my grape also. You have the result in your hand."

"Long life to you, Mr. Sanders! you have done and are doing a good work. And where is your vineyard?"

"I have one on Etna ; volcanic land is very favourable. I sell the produce of that vineyard, but I have another in the Val di Mazara, where I have built a *loggia*, and got my wine-press, and so forth. I spend a good part of the summer and autumn there ; the vintage is a glorious time with us."

"Hang me, if I should not like to see your process ! These things interest me amazingly."

"Well, Sir Philip, we shall be delighted if you will honour us with a visit. You are a yachting man, I understand. Why not visit the Mediterranean this coming autumn ? Your yacht can run in at Mazara, and you can leave it there. If you will let me know when to expect you, I will be on the look-out and will meet you. We live in a simple sort of way, but that will be a change perhaps, and make you enjoy getting back to grander fare, which is something."

"I suspect, John, that the only merit of the fare you would be able to offer Sir Philip," said his sister, "would consist in that circumstance. He would have to take his own cook with him."

"No, I won't take my own cook with me. I'll trust my friend Mr. Sanders."

"I can't promise much in the cooking line, of course," said Sanders. "Our Serafina does five or six things pretty well, when not too liberal of her garlic and oil ; so I tell her to stick to those half dozen dishes, and we ring the changes on them."

"Why I am reckoned a nice man, I cannot think," said Sir Philip.

"Who calls you a nice man ?" asked Lady Mordaunt. "Not I, at any rate."

"There is my Dowager down upon me again. Did not I tell you she had no mercy ? Well, I suppose I am not what the ladies call a nice man, but I will refer the question

to one who is unsophisticated and latest from the school-room, your left hand neighbour, Mr. Sanders. I should like to know her opinion, and whether *she* would call me a nice man." Gertrude, thus appealed to, coloured up, but could not utter a syllable.

"Speak out, and say something—can't you, Gertrude?" said her uncle, nudging her.

"I cannot"—this was in a whisper.

"My niece says, 'Not exactly,'" said Uncle John.

"But I said nothing at all," remonstrated Gertrude, still *sotto voce*.

"Not exactly," repeated Sir Philip, "not exactly a nice man! I wonder how far off I am from the young lady's measure. However, the niceness I spoke of was different. I meant by nice, fastidious and particular. Now I never complain of anything if it's good."

"Who does?" asked Mrs. Wyndham laughing.

"Plenty of people, ma'am. They complain, that they may seem to be connoisseurs. They really don't know when a thing is good, nor what good means. Anything is good, I take it, when it is good of its kind; and so Mr. Sanders's female seraph may turn out very good dishes. What I hate is pretension. Pretension makes me sick." Then Mrs. Wyndham guessed that Sir Philip was thinking of the *côtelettes à la Ste. Ménéhould*, and her spirits sank. "When last I was in the Mediterranean in the *Plover*," continued Sir Philip, "poor Graham was with me."

"We were so sorry, and really quite shocked, to hear of his death," said Mrs. Wyndham. "He must be a great loss."

"To himself, of course. I don't know that he is a loss to any one else. I miss him in a way, for he was a very good fellow to sit down to table with. But it was his own fault. He killed himself."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Mrs. Wyndham. "Actually

committed suicide ! I suppose it has been hushed up ; the papers did not allude to anything of the kind."

"He practically committed suicide," said Sir Philip ; "I did not mean that he blew his brains out, but he kept an assassin in his house ; in short, he died of—a bad cook ; one of your cooks with pretensions."

"I should have thought," said Mrs. Wyndham, who could not help smiling, although the subject was so serious, "that a person would be more likely to die of a good cook than of a bad one."

"There you are quite wrong. What is good, you eat with a relish ; what you relish, you digest. Poor Graham had a very delicate stomach, a ticklish sort of digestion ; cookery was everything to him. Well, he goes and engages unadvisedly a man for the season, one of those fellows who call themselves French cooks, but who have probably been nothing above *marmitons* in their own country. The first time I dined with Graham after this chap was in office, at the first mouthful I took, I laid down knife and fork, and said, 'Graham, part with that man. It is as much as your health is worth.' He said he would, but Graham was very indolent, and the next time I met him, seeing he was looking very seedy, I inquired, and found he had as yet done nothing. At last I stirred him up to part with the fellow. 'Now Graham,' I said, 'this is a serious matter, you may depend upon it'—for I saw what an altered man he was—'pack that poisoner off with his month's wages, and board wages, too, if necessary. Don't stick at a few shillings.' However, he disregarded my advice, not from stinginess, I know—he was not stingy—but from sheer want of energy, and he died—died before the month was up—died, I verily believe, of that man's diabolical cookery. The fellow is jobbing about town, I understand, at this minute, but his name ought to be posted up as a warning to the incautious."

Mrs. Wyndham, as she listened, felt a kind of dryness in her mouth, and a vague apprehension and presentiment, which would have hindered her from asking the name of the delinquent. At that moment she would have given something that she had secured M. Louis at any price. But Mr. Wyndham, who had heard every word of Sir Philip's speech, *did* ask the name.

"I shall remember it in a minute—what was it, Poole? I fancy it was Pattin, or some such name."

"It *was* Pattin, Sir Philip," said the satellite. "I heard you say so at the time."

Then there was an audible chuckle from some one standing at the side table. It was from Bowles, who had to stuff the napkin he held almost into his mouth to prevent himself from laughing outright. As for Mrs. Wyndham, poor soul, she felt that she could have died on the spot, of the fatal name, as Graham had of the individual's cookery. And Mr. Wyndham had heard the name, too. What must her husband think, what must he feel? His state of mind was certainly not to be envied, and never perhaps had his conjugal affection received so severe a shock. He felt that he had been betrayed, and thought he would never be able to trust his wife again.

The ladies did not sit long, and Sanders was the first to follow them, as he wished to arrange with Emma about the music.

"That brother-in-law of yours is a regular brick," said the great man to Wyndham, when Sanders had left the table.

But the great man had not approved the dinner, and it was poor consolation to the disappointed host to find that, if his feast had been a failure, his brother-in-law had been a success. "He is a very good fellow," he replied rather absently. Poor Mr. Wyndham was very sore and very sad, and very angry, too; yet he was under the dire necessity of

keeping up appearances and keeping down temper for the next three or four hours. Such are the pleasures of life in the world.



CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE CONCERT AND THE DANCE.

“How could you talk so much to that odious Sir Philip, uncle?” asked Gertrude.

“I find in the dictionary,” said the uncle, “that odious means hateful, worthy of hatred. It is a strong word.”

“I mean very disagreeable; I don’t hate him, or anybody.”

“That’s right, my dear.”

“But he can only talk of eating and drinking, uncle; and you talked of nothing else, either. I was quite amazed.”

“Were you? But what was I to talk about to him, as that was all he seemed inclined to talk about? There he was, and I had to make the best of him. You cannot make more of a cat than his skin.”

“And you asked him to your Sicilian country-house.”

“That is, to meet you, my love; and, if you prefer a sea voyage to a land one, I have no doubt Sir Philip would bring you out to me in the *Plover*, and you will think him a very ‘nice man’ after a bit. You would find him very good-natured, I’ll be bound, and you would live like a fighting cock. After all, he’s not so bad a man. He has got some good in him, I daresay, when you learn how to draw it out.”

“O, Uncle John!”

“The good, if there is any, is well corked down,” observed Emma; “at present a man who could and would play the

violoncello would be an angel to me, even if the man was Sir Philip."

"Would he, indeed!" said her uncle. "Then the post is still vacant?"

"Yes, I was unsuccessful in my hunt."

"Will you try *me*? I have been looking at the accompaniment. It is easy, and I believe I could play it at sight."

"You can play the violoncello? Dear me! Why did you not say so this morning?"

"Because I thought you might get a better performer, so I kept my offer in reserve. Stay a minute, I must just fetch my spectacles,"

"Can we trust him, do you think, Gertrude?" asked Emma. "He will not break down, will he?"

"I am sure he will do very well. He would not offer himself if he was doubtful. Besides, Uncle John has a very good ear; I have observed that; I fancy he does not sing ill, and has been used to amateur concerts. Here he comes."

"We are really much obliged to you, uncle," said Emma, much more graciously than usual; "you are truly a friend in need."

"I am to be an angel, you know; but I must wait for my promotion till you see how I acquit myself; and now I must tune the instrument."

"I do not think Mr. Devereux was a first-rate performer, so I should not wonder if we have gained by the change. I hope you have observed my butterfly," she continued, pointing to her uncle's present, which she wore; "it has had two admirers already, the toady and Lady Mordaunt." Emma, of course, could not be rude to her uncle under present circumstances, but, in point of fact, her feelings were considerably softened towards him. Her dislike had proceeded mainly from the mortification he inflicted on her pride, and still more from that which she was continually dreading that

he might inflict ; but now other thoughts were uppermost, and she cared less about the world's opinion of Uncle John. Nothing, moreover, could be better than getting him installed at this instrument, where no one need know—at least, not the company in general—that he was her relative ; and, if he played pretty well, he might pass for a paid musician. So he was at once utilized and shelved. “Where is Mama ?” she said. “Did you hear that about M. Pattin, Gertrude ! I am afraid she will be quite heart-broken.”

“She is in the card-room,” replied Gertrude.

The card-room was a small subsidiary drawing-room facing the landing-place, and over Uncle John's usual bed-room, but it was somewhat larger than that apartment, for it extended also over some additional space occupied by a china closet on the ground floor. This room, opening at the side by a door into the back drawing-room, was usually considered as Mrs. Wyndham's private sitting-room. It was now to be allotted for the card-players, as they would thus be removed sufficiently far from the singing ; whist-players disliking distracting noise close to their ears. The dancing would not begin until later, when the cards would be nearly over. Sir Philip never stayed late. He was careful of his health, and liked to get to bed betimes. Here Emma found her mother, with Lady Mordaunt and Mrs. Abinger, the latter having just arrived ; so she had no opportunity of administering any consolation without being overheard. Mrs. Wyndham was behaving with a fortitude worthy of a better cause, and, if her daughter might detect the smothered look of care, her guests, at least, had no suspicion of the corroding grief which lay at her heart. The gentlemen soon came up, and the company began to arrive. Being Saturday night, an early hour had been mentioned in the cards of invitation, and the whist-players were at once set to work or, rather, to play ; but with Mr. Abinger and Lady Mordaunt it was work, very serious though pleasurable work.

"I thought you would be better here, though the room is small," said Mrs. Wyndham, "being further removed from the instruments; the singing might have disturbed you in the front room."

"We are better *because*, not *though*, the room is small," said Lady Mordaunt, "for this keeps the world out. I say we are very snug here—quite in heaven; what do you say, Sir Philip?"

"I never *was* in heaven, so cannot compare," replied her enemy. "We are snug, however—very. Is heaven snug? You seem to know something about it."

"The card-table is Lady Mordaunt's paradise," said Mr. Abinger; "we all know that."

"When she wins," observed Sir Philip.

"I should think," said Mrs. Abinger's friend, another dowager, "that it is a very bad arrangement, playing against your husband. You never can gain; it is out of one hand into the other."

"I won't have the dowager for my partner," said Sir Philip emphatically.

"We manage these matters by playing alternately," replied Mr. Abinger, "when we cannot make up two rubbers, which I dare say we shall by-and-by. In the meantime Mr. Poole takes the other hand."

"Of course Mr. Poole was ready to do anything he was desired. It was the tenure by which he held his post.

Leaving these uninteresting individuals to their amusement, we will return with Emma to the drawing-room. The Vincent party had arrived, and others were streaming up the stairs every moment.

"We must begin our singing," said Minny, "before there is a crowd to choke our voices."

Emma agreed, and they threw off with a trio, in which she and Julia bore their part with William Vincent, but poor Emma could not join with her usual spirit. She sang,

she talked, she smiled, but her eye wandered occasionally about the room uneasily. Mr. Jardine had come up with the rest, but had made no attempt to speak to her, nor, in fact, had come near her. There would have been no use in his doing so ; of course there could be no opportunity for a private word at present ; nor, indeed, until the dancing should begin. It was only prudent for him, therefore, to keep at a distance and make no parade of intimacy ; for her brother Algernon was in the room, and, although he seemed to be paying no particular attention to his sister's proceedings, she knew that his eye would be on her, and on Baines's dear friend also.

Uncle John's successes were to be numerous that evening. He and Will Vincent got into talk together, and by-and-by they favoured the company with a duet, in which Uncle John's voice was by no means the worst of the two. In fact, he had a very good voice, one of those full-toned mellow voices which go to the heart. Julia was in ecstasies. She was a regular *fanatica* for music, and, if Uncle John had been twice as unpolished as he was, it would have gone for nothing in her eyes. As it was, she made so much of him that Emma began to think that, by some curious freak of fortune, her despised uncle was going to turn into the hero of the evening.

"When a man has a really good voice," said the delighted Julia, "it beats a woman's all to nothing."

"I cannot agree with you there," said Algernon.

"I am sure I am right. It has a pathetic element in it which a woman's voice lacks. *Our* voices are more like instruments, bird-like. A man's voice has so much more heart in it and tenderness ; it speaks. I am sure your dear uncle would give us a solo. Emma, do ask him. We had a bravura song last ; we must vary ; this next should be something soft and plaintive, like a serenade or a barcarole ; you know what I mean. Willy was going to give us

something with his guitar accompaniment, but that can be later."

So the "dear uncle" was asked, and sang some Sicilian ballads which he had picked up from the peasantry and the fishermen. Taking up young Vincent's guitar, he improvised a slight but very sweet accompaniment to his voice, and, when he laid down the instrument, it was amidst the universal applause of the room. Truly Uncle John was a success that evening. Julia Vincent was in raptures, and told him that she wished he was *her* uncle; in return for which polite speech John Sanders made his best bow.

"I will not give him away," said Gertrude.

"I must dance part of the evening," whispered Emma to her sister; "so we three must exchange places at the pianoforte. Julia does not care to dance. She will devote herself to the harp."

"I am very nervous except in a duet," replied Gertrude. "I was in hopes you would not want me."

"But, you see, I cannot remain stuck here all night," said Emma. "Fanny Elliot said she would help till M. Dubois came, but I do not see her yet, and Minny is going to dance;" and again her eye wandered about, but it was after another person.

Fanny Elliot, fortunately for poor Gertrude's nerves, made her appearance shortly, and Emma, after playing the first quadrille and waltz, was set free for the present. The violoncello had done its part well. "You keep time so admirably," said Julia; "that is everything, when playing in concert."

"Better a wrong note than a hair's breadth out of time," replied Sanders. "Come, let us fire off again."

"My dear Mr. Sanders," said Minny, who was now at the piano, "you are too enthusiastic; you must let the dancers breathe and our fingers rest a little."

Meanwhile Emma had been dancing with Lord Tyndrum.

He was as marked as ever in his attentions, but the young lady was tired of him now, and was thinking of something else. She hoped he would not stick too close to her ; it might be inconvenient ; and the process of chilling off, which she frequently practised upon her admirers when it no longer amused her to prolong a flirtation, had begun. But Mr. Jardine had disappeared. She could make nothing of this proceeding ; he had gone without exchanging or attempting to exchange a word with her. That gentleman, however, had done a very wise thing. He knew that Algernon Wyndham's eye must be upon him, and, overhearing him make some allusion to another party in the neighbourhood, where perhaps he should look in before the night was over, Mr. Jardine, who was behind him when he caught these words, immediately turned, wandered towards the door, then slipped downstairs, and was out of the house in a moment. He knew the direction Algernon would take, as the party was in Albemarle Street, so he went to the other side of the Square, beyond Lansdowne House, and walked up and down so as to command a view of Hay Hill. What he had expected occurred. Algernon shortly took his departure ; and no sooner had Mr. Jardine seen the spy on his actions fairly off than he returned to the house, and it was not long before he was waltzing with Miss Wyndham. He had a good deal to communicate, and it had to be done in very piecemeal fashion, when they paused occasionally for a few moments to take breath. It is neither easy nor comfortable to tell or hear secrets in a crowd of people who know you, particularly distressing secrets, as were those which had to be imparted ; but Jardine's face was inexpressive, and Emma had considerable self-command when the effort was necessary.

It may be as well to state first how much was true and how much was false with reference to this affair. Mr. Baines of Tetherby Hall was Captain Baines's uncle, but,

so far from having intended to make him his heir, he had never asked him inside his doors for several years. Of course there had been no telegram, but the gentleman, as it happened, did die suddenly of apoplexy the following week. It was quite true, also, that the nephew mentioned in the papers, whose name Emma had never heard before, was the expected heir. The substance of Mr. Jardine's information was to this effect—that Captain Baines had found his uncle better than he expected; he had been sent for in order to sign some necessary papers, and, when this was done, he had had a good deal of confidential conversation with his relative; and this led to an avowal which had displeased the old gentleman. "Perhaps," said Mr. Jardine, "I need scarcely say what that avowal was. My friend thought it right and sincere to make it, but, as it seems, it was an imprudence on his part. He is too frank by half. There was no quarrel, however, nor was there the remotest ground for a quarrel. The old gentleman was simply out of humour; I verily believe, merely because he found that he was not the sole object of interest to his nephew. He was very selfish, as old bachelors are apt to be." Mr. Jardine proceeded to inform his partner that his friend had committed a still worse piece of imprudence. He had left his uncle for a day and run up to London; and he took care to let Emma know that she was the cause. He was so desirous to see her or communicate with her, if possible, on account of the evil report of him which he knew she had received.

When he had arrived at this point, Emma suggested a few more turns. They were close to the disconsolate Tyn-drum, who had his eye fixed upon her. They stopped on the other side the room, and then Mr. Jardine completed his story. The uncle was seized with an attack of paralysis while Frederick Baines was away; it was quite unexpected, but the old gentleman had resented his absence, as if it had

been an intentional neglect ; and then the other nephew, he of Hammerbridge, had come over. The enfeeblement of Mr. Baines's mind had made him peculiarly liable to receive false impressions. The one nephew was away, he who considered himself as sure of the inheritance, while the other nephew, who did not reckon that he had a chance, was there to pay the most respectful and assiduous attentions. Of course the most was made of this circumstance, and of the opportunity so unfortunately afforded, especially by a sister of Randall Baines who had accompanied him. She had so worked on her uncle's feelings, who was not in a state of mind to form a fair judgment, as to induce him to make a fresh will in favour of her brother. "The will cannot, of course, be opened till the funeral," said Jardine, "but an attached servant in the house has told Frederick that he knows for certain that his master had made this new disposition of his property. Frederick does not doubt the correctness of the information, and his hopes of happiness therefore, as he told me, are, or will be, buried in his uncle's grave. I have been charged with a letter for you, in which he details all. He will be at the funeral on Monday, but will be back in town immediately. He is very desirous for a parting interview with you, and begged me, if possible, to arrange one. You will not refuse him?"

"A parting interview?" said Emma, who was sorely embarrassed what to say, for she hardly knew how far it was compatible with her dignity to treat Jardine as one who was wholly in the secret.

He perceived her hesitation, and thought it wise to break through all difficulties on this head. "I am sure," he said, "you will excuse me, Miss Wyndham, for waiving all reserve at such a time, and for confessing that I am aware of my friend's deep attachment to you, and that I also know that he has made a declaration of his feelings. It was with

tears in his eyes that he told me but to-day that, could he have foreseen what has now occurred, his secret should have remained for ever concealed in his own bosom. All he can do now is to throw himself at your feet and beg your forgiveness, and then bid you a long farewell."

"There is nothing which needs forgiveness," said Emma; "surely Captain Baines does not do me the injustice of supposing me to be mercenary."

"I am sure he reckons you an angel upon earth, but you will read this letter and see what he says. I must own that I think my friend somewhat hasty and hand-over-head. He is going to sail in a fortnight's time for South America, to take service for the Argentine Republic, and get himself killed, of course."

"The Argentine Republic?"

"Yes, it is at war, or going to war, with some other Republic. I forget which; they are always squabbling."

"What madness!"

"So say I; particularly as I believe that he has an influential friend, Lord Selden I mean, who could do something for him at once; that is, however, in the event of his being married."

"Why only on that condition?" asked Emma.

"It is no condition of Lord Selden's. The situation which he could procure for Baines is that of English consul at Hamburg, with a very good salary attached; but these honest Hamburgers insist on having a married man. The last consul, I believe, was rather a loose fish, and I suppose they, in their wisdom, imputed this to his celibate state. But I must give you Baines's letter."

It was not so easy to do this unobserved; but the manœuvre was effected at last, while the partners stepped for a moment into the balcony, which was full of flowers.

"I shall have no opportunity for reading it until these people are all gone," said Emma.

"But you will answer it, and I may tell him you will see him—may I not?"

"If it could be arranged."

"We will arrange it all," replied Jardine, "if you will only write him a line directed to his lodgings in Piccadilly—your maid could post it; and in the meantime, what shall I say?"

"Tell him—tell him—not to think of going to America. It is madness." Jardine now left her, and went to ask Gertrude to dance.

Here was poor Emma, then, with two confidants forced upon her; an ignorant and forward maid-servant, and a gentleman with whom she had really the very slightest kind of acquaintance. It was mortifying, but seemed, as she thought, unavoidable, and to have come about through no fault of her own. The fear of losing her lover absorbed her mind, nevertheless, too much for her to spend her time in deploring these annoying accessories. She was unable to read her letter immediately, even after she had retired to her room. Gertrude talked to her, and she answered mechanically, as one in a dream, with her hand always reverting to the precious letter in her pocket. Then they both undressed. Rachel had been dismissed, but still there was no unobserved opportunity. At last Emma was driven (as she viewed the matter) to read her lover's letter while on her knees and pretending to say her prayers. This irreverent act, it is fair to say, went against the grain with the poor girl—but how many other things had gone sorely against the grain! One thing had appeared to necessitate another, and let her down lower and lower—lower than she could have conceived it possible; and she was to sink yet lower still. It is always so when we take a wrong step. We do not know whither we are going. Hazael, said, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do these things?"

The Captain's letter did not substantially contain more

than Emma already knew, only it was couched in a more impassioned and effective style than had been Mr. Jardine's abstract. There were the most solemn protestations that *never, never*, would he have avowed his love, or sought to win her affections, had he known that he should be well-nigh a penniless man. He would have died sooner, and let his secret perish with him ; and now all that remained for him to do *was* to die, and so on. But he implored her to see him ; he had that to say which he did not wish to leave unsaid, and could not trust to a letter. He must part from her with the assurance that his fair fame would never suffer in her estimation ; for this indeed would be worse than death, that his Emma—he must call her so for the last time—should ever have to blush for having accepted his love.

Emma would have sobbed over this pathetic production, but, conscious that she would attract Gertrude's attention, she suppressed all audible demonstrations of emotion, wiped her eyes, and then wondered why Captain Baines should be so penniless a man, since he once told her he had a competence independently of his expectations. And must it not be so, since there was the cab and the tiger ? It was but a way of speaking. No, she was not mercenary ; he should learn that. Was there not the resource, under the worst circumstances, of the cottage with the jessamine porch ? So Emma got into bed, and lay awake half the remaining hours—not of night, for the day was already dawning, but the hours which were allotted to sleep, writing her answer ready in imagination.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FAMILY JARS.

MR. WYNDHAM was very angry with his wife. He had never, since they two had been joined in holy matrimony, been so irate, except perhaps on the last occasion on which he had paid his son's debts, when the fond mother had attempted to frame some excuses for her darling. Mrs. Wyndham knew he was angry, and that he must have his say out—the sooner the better. So, instead of making her escape, she lingered on in the drawing-room after the company had departed, while the lights were being extinguished by James. Her husband, who seemed to grudge their burning one minute longer than they were wanted, or hated the sight of them as recalling the detestable party, now more than ever detestable since the dinner had been a failure, had rung for the man at once, and remained superintending the process. When the sleepy footman had finished and gone, Mrs. Wyndham recalled her husband, who was leaving the room. She was sure that the sooner he spoke out the more angrily he would express himself, and it was her policy to give him the opportunity, because she knew him well enough to be aware that the more he gave way to his temper, the greater would be the reaction in her favour.

Mrs. Wyndham was a woman wise in her generation, and had never been known to be out of temper with her husband. This gives a wife a great advantage, which few have the wisdom to secure ; so I repeat it,—Mrs. Wyndham was a wise woman in her way. “Percy,” she said, “I am so very sorry at this unfortunate mistake about the cook. I depended on Mrs. Bamber, and she assured me he could send up a good dinner. I have felt it quite difficult

to keep up my spirits while people were here ; I have been so vexed on your account."

"Your vexation, Beatrice, will not mend matters," said her husband. "I dare say you are vexed now—I am more than vexed, I can tell you—but had you cared as much as you affect to do about my wishes, you would, and you *could*, I am certain, have secured a good cook. You say you depended on Mrs. Bamber. Did she say this fellow was a first-rate cook? If so, the woman ought to be prosecuted for—for—" he was going to say libel, but he remembered that a libel must be injurious to reputation—so he concluded "she ought to be branded as a pernicious liar. Did she say that this Pattin was the best man she knew of? If she did, I will never deal with her again."

"No, Percy," replied his wife, thus interrogated ; "there certainly was another whom she mentioned as being at the top of the tree and employed by great houses."

"And pray, why did you not take him, if he was disengaged?"

"His charge was enormous, and I thought that this might be greatly owing to the mere fact of his being the fashion, so that we should be positively throwing away money. A very good character was given of this man, who, I concluded, only wanted a name to be fully equal to the other."

"You *thought*, you *concluded*, but, you see, you thought and concluded wrongly ; had you attended to my strongly expressed wishes, you would have grudged nothing to secure the best cook you could get. I should have grudged nothing, and, at any rate, should never have complained of you, however high the charge ; you would have done your part. As it is, you have not done your part, and I can never trust you again."

"I do my best," said his wife, "to keep things together ; I endeavour to consult appearances and, in particular, your wishes on this head, while I strive to keep down the bills.

You know yourself how high you always reckon them to be, for all my endeavours."

This was not a wise remark. "Now, Beatrice," said her husband, "I will tell you what it is: you like to spend on what you and the girls fancy—these foolish, useless balls and parties; while what I like, namely, a well-appointed house and table, is sacrificed to this object."

"If the girls go out in the world, we must repay civilities," replied Mrs. Wyndham; "and if they do not, how are they ever to have a chance of marrying? You wish them to marry, do you not, Percy?"

"If they marry well I shall be glad, but I should just like to know, is there any prospect of this as yet? Emma has been dancing about these three years, and I hear of this and that partner, but no proposal. Meanwhile I pay. I don't want to get rid of my girls at all; and, certainly, if they make poor matches, I shall heartily wish they had not had the opportunity. No, this is all nonsense. You women love these frivolities, I hate the whole thing; but you bother me into consenting, and, after that, will not so much as allow me in my own house to set a creditable dinner before a few friends."

Then Mrs. Wyndham burst out crying. She was not usually lacrymose, and Mr. Wyndham, like most men, could not bear women's tears. "Oh, if you are going to take it that way, I shall go to bed;" and he turned towards the door.

"It is time to go to bed anyhow, Percy," said his wife, applying her pocket handkerchief to her eyes.

I believe no more was said about M. Pattin, but Mrs. Wyndham had so far gained her object, that her husband afterwards thought he had overdone his wrath, and been harsh. Mrs. Wyndham, when she saw the next morning that he was pacified, and spoke quite gently to her, as one who had reason to apologize rather than find fault, took

care not to reopen the question. Reconciliations may be very fine things once or twice, and seem to clear the atmosphere, but they lose their effect by repetition, and become wearisome. Men, at least, weary of them, for they do not usually like scenes. Mrs. Wyndham knew that her Percy, in particular, greatly disliked scenes ; so she was satisfied with results, without seeking to hear any retractation of unkind speeches, and all went on as if nothing had occurred. I think, on the whole, she had rather gained by the transaction.

The next morning was one of hurry ; breakfast had to be dispatched earlier than it would otherwise, on account of getting to Mass. Sanders had gone early, notwithstanding the late hour at which he had retired, and Tyrell had seen that he had breakfast on his return ; so he had finished before the mother and daughters came down. It was not a comfortable breakfast. Gertrude had been crying, having just learnt that Tyrell was leaving ; and then Mrs. Wyndham had to disclose the plan of going into Kent for ten days to see Lady Ellerton. It was a terrible blow to Emma ; and her mother knew that it would be so. She dealt the blow, however, with much less reluctance than might have been expected, for she was ill pleased with her daughter—a state of mind which blunts compassion. Emma, after flirting all night with Lord Tyndrum at the ball to which they had gone on Thursday, had been barely civil to him at her own house on the following Saturday. She had danced with him, it is true, but had scarcely vouchsafed a word to him. This Mrs. Wyndham knew, for she had watched them ; and that Emma had, moreover, avoided him afterwards her mother felt certain, for from time to time she had seen the tall Scotchman threading his way about the rooms in a purposeless manner, or standing gazing at something with an uncomfortable expression on his face. Once, when she noticed his eye fixed in this way, she moved

forward to observe what had attracted his attention, and then she saw her daughter and the "black-leg," who were partners in the waltz, engaged in close conversation. This was enough, it must be allowed, to put Mrs. Wyndham considerably out of sorts. She felt sick of the whole thing. This was the game Emma was always playing, and she was inclined to think that there was, after all, some truth in what her husband had said—that all this going out was perhaps only furnishing her daughters with the opportunity of making bad matches. With her husband Mrs. Wyndham was not out of humour, though he had spoken hard things, but with her daughter Emma, who had said nothing at all, she was exceedingly out of humour; and so she felt the less pity for her.

"To visit Lady Ellerton, and spend ten days at Gorsham!" exclaimed Emma; "and just at this time, too, and with three balls next week!"

"That cannot be helped," said her mother; "as for me, I shall not be sorry for a little rest. I have not got Lady Ellerton's answer yet, but I have no doubt she will be glad to have us."

Lady Ellerton was the widow of an East Indian judge, and an old friend of the "Nabob," Mrs. Wyndham's uncle. She had once been a beauty and a wit, but of the beauty nothing remained save a wreck, and of the wit, only a sharp and satirical tongue. She was now, in short, a very crabbed old woman, disliking old age particularly, and grumbling continually. Mrs. Wyndham, however, did not neglect old friends; partly from prudence, and partly from a certain amount of good feeling and grateful remembrance of former kindness. In this she was by no means altogether deficient. Her treatment of her own kith and kin, it is true, appeared to form an exception, but then she had been early removed from her family, and had never really cared for her brothers and sisters. She had known them since only as a

mortification to her pride. So Mrs. Wyndham was attentive to old Lady Ellerton, tiresome as she was, and often paid her long visits, when in London, to Emma's great annoyance; and now they were to spend ten days at Gorsham.

"And why did you never say a word of this, Mama?" asked Emma, in an angry and injured tone, as if almost calling her mother to account. "To go and make this offer, and not so much as to tell me!"

"I suppose I was hardly bound to consult you, Emma," replied her mother sharply. "Your father wished us to pay this visit, and your likings and dislikings could not have made any difference; I had no choice in the matter, although, I presume, I have a right to a choice, without asking my children's permission."

"Emma does not mean that, Mama," said Gertrude, interposing; "only she is disappointed, and vexed also that you should write without telling her you were doing so."

"You have only to look at your sister's face at this moment," replied Mrs. Wyndham, "to understand why I put off letting her know until yesterday evening had been got over."

"I am treated like a baby!" said Emma.

"My dear Emma, I wish you would not act like one," said her mother. "Do you expect to get through life with everything your own way? You know very well that Parliament is probably about to be dissolved, and, if so, your father will have to go down to Whittlebury."

"But they say now that it will not be dissolved; and, supposing it is, *we* shall not be wanted at Whittlebury, I imagine. We never go out of town till late in August."

"The election will entail much expense, and your father dislikes burning the candle at both ends. We are parting with two servants now, and it would be better, in that case, not to be in a hurry to replace them, but to rest

on our oars until we see what is done. A week will show."

"I settled for that girl to come on Wednesday," said Emma.

"I spoke to Miss Vincent myself last night," replied her mother, "and put her off. I said I should not know for another week whether we wanted her. Minny replied that the delay did not signify, for, now that her cousin was so ill in the house, they could not receive their expected friend, so had a bed still at liberty. And, by-the-by, girls, do not go to Cadogan-place; I have a horror of diphtheria, and it is infectious."

"So even Minny Vincent is told before I am!" exclaimed Emma indignantly. "I think I have cause to complain, indeed! Why am I treated in this cruel way, and no regard shown to my feelings?"

"I don't see how it would have made you happier to know this a day sooner, Emma. All I can say is, that I wish you commonly paid half as much regard to my feelings and wishes as I do to yours."

"What have I done now?" asked Emma haughtily.

Mrs. Wyndham continued: "I am sick of the whole thing. I have to look on at what I do not like, at what you know I do not like, and yet cannot venture to speak a word without seeing you fly out in this way. It is enough to make me wish never to come to town again. To mention only one thing: do you suppose it is very pleasant to my feelings to see you one evening giving a young man the most marked encouragement, and two nights afterwards scarcely treating him with common civility? I have to look on, seeing you earn the reputation of a flirt, and yet hold my tongue. This vexes me cruelly, but you think nothing of it."

"Do you mean that foolish, raw-boned Scotchman, Mama? Surely you cannot make out a case against me because I did

not devote myself to him at our own party, when there was so much for me to look after. Besides, I hear he is rich. It is because I am not a flirt that I do not choose to encourage a gentleman whom I certainly should refuse if he asked me."

"But you might be civil, and not show that you preferred any rubbish to be met with in the room to him; and that after seeming to receive his attentions so favourably only two nights previous."

"I did not know you asked rubbish to your house, Mama," said Emma, who knew very well who was meant by the "rubbish." I think Mrs. Wyndham had better not have alluded either to Lord Tyndrum or the "rubbish."

Then the *paterfamilias* entered, and the discussion was dropped. Mrs. Wyndham had only smiles for *him*; her vexation had all been wreaked on Emma. He, on his part, was very mild and bland. "Yes, my love, I will have chocolate," he said. "It suits me best when I breakfast late. Where is John? He was really everything to us yesterday evening. Eagle called him a 'brick,' which means a good deal with him."

"And before Sir Philip went," added his wife, "he said that he had spent a very pleasant evening, and begged me to tell my brother—John was at the piano singing—that he would certainly pay him a visit in Sicily."

No two people could have been more comfortable together than were the husband and wife, and no one would have suspected the *brise* of the previous evening.

"You had better get your things on," said Mrs. Wyndham to her daughter; "you are always longer than I am, and it is nearly eleven."

"It is all a plot," said Emma to her sister, when they reached their room,—“an unworthy plot to get me away. Why am I to be served so? Why am I to be treated with this mistrust? What have I done to deserve it?”

"What do you mean by a plot, Emma? That is absurd. You may rely upon it, that it is all a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. Papa arranged it; he has taken fright about expenses."

"Then you knew of it?"

"No; I never heard a word about it till this morning."

"To go and spend ten days at Gorsham, and dine at five o'clock, with those horrid long evenings, and old Miss Downs, whom I abominate, talking through her nose!" Miss Downs was a maiden sister residing with Lady Ellerton.

"It is dull, of course, but it is only for ten days."

"But we shall not come back to town, you may be quite sure," said Emma, "whether Parliament is dissolved or not. We shall go on to some stupid seaside place, where there is not a soul I care about; and there we shall sit out glaring in the sun and staring at the sea all day long, which I detest, with Mama talking of nothing but the weekly bills. It is enough to drive one mad."

"Come, Emma," said her sister, "we shall be late for Mass if you do not bustle."

So Emma had to bustle, and then her mother's voice was heard on the stairs calling them, and they all set off for church. One might have wished them a better preparation.

"We shall be hardly there before the Gospel," said Gertrude; and then they quickened their pace and not another word was said.

On their return Emma found a private opportunity to write her letter, as Uncle John took Gertrude out for a walk after luncheon. This letter, of course, contained protestations of fidelity. She told Baines that she had not loved him for the sake of his expected inheritance, and she did not love him the less now that he had lost it. They could be very happy on moderate means. Then she proceeded to state her plan, with which the reader is already

acquainted—to wait a year and a month until she was of age and her own mistress. Should her parents then offer insuperable objections to their union, she would redeem her promise in spite of all opposition. She also told him that they were leaving London on Thursday for ten days, and that she felt very uncertain about their return. She would see him, however, on Tuesday afternoon for a short time, if it could be managed. Such was the substance of Emma's letter; and now she had to put her pride in her pocket and ask Rachel to post it for her either that evening or early the next morning.

Rachel took the letter, but it was for the purpose of discharging her commission in a more effective manner. She had, in fact, received some private directions from Jardine. He had slipped a small piece of paper into her hand while she was presenting him with a cup of tea; and on this paper was written—"If a letter is given you to post, bring it to No. — Piccadilly. Wait, if C. B. is not at home." So Rachel took the letter straight to Captain Baines's lodgings. It was easy for her to do so, as she had the Sunday afternoon at her free disposal. Here she saw the interesting Captain himself, and received a most flattering reception, accompanied by a *douceur* of the solid order, notwithstanding his professedly penniless state. A good deal of conversation took place between the lover and his mistress's waiting-woman, which made Rachel feel herself quite a personage fit to figure in "genteel comedy"; and then Captain Baines wrote a reply, in which he told his love that he would call between four and five on the Tuesday, if she could remain at home by herself. In the meantime, as those sad moments would be so brief, he must explain, in reply to the proposition she had so nobly made, that he was a much poorer man, or probably would be much poorer, than hitherto he had been. Of his own he had but £200 a year, having hitherto received £300 additional in

the form of an allowance from his uncle, which he could scarcely expect would be left to him, since he knew that his relative had been much irritated against him when he was induced to make this new will. As for himself, he could not and would not ask her or allow her to share such poverty with him. It was true that he had an offer of a situation which, had they married now, would have placed them in comfortable circumstances, but, as it was out of the question to hope that her parents would give ear to his proposals, prejudiced as they had been against him, and as she was determined not to choose for herself while under age, nothing remained for him but to vanish from the scene. Would that he had never appeared thereon to mar her peace ! Of his own, he would not speak. She must learn to forget him, and as for him—here followed something about seeking death on the battle-field, and the Argentine Republic : that was his great gun ; Jardine had told him so, and he did not fail to use it with effect.

Then Rachel took back the letter, and gave an account of her interview. She had thought it best, she told her young mistress, to go straight to the Captain's lodgings, and thus make sure that he had the letter in time. Jardine's directions she ignored altogether, glad to take credit to herself for a bright idea and zeal in executing it. " But Ma'am," said she, " what a state the Captain is in ! Quite like a desperado ! I never see a man in such a state. And he is going to America, he said. I am sure you must have a heart of stone if you let him go ; and he such a fine man ! so noble ! "

All this vulgar rhodomontade was not without its effect on Emma ; she made, however, no direct response, asking only how she was to see him. " I should be sorry," she said, " if his visit was observed ; just at present, I mean, and as matters stand."

" Of course it must not be observed, but you may trust

to me. I told the Captain I would be on the watch, so that he need not even ring. I think you had best see him in the little drawing-room, because no one is likely to go in there; if anybody comes, you could pop through the door into the back drawing-room, and the Captain could slip down when the coast was clear."

These details were rather revolting to Emma, but they had to be conveyed, and she had asked for them. If she was to receive a clandestine visit from her lover, it was imperative that some precautions should be adopted, however disagreeable it might be to dwell upon them. Rachel, after all, had done her part very well, and the arrangement suggested was, under the circumstances, the best that could be made. I need scarcely say that Emma's plan of waiting until she was of age could not possibly suit the Captain. It would be, he doubted not, utterly ruinous to his hopes. Emma, he was sure, by some means or other, would soon become convinced of his unworthiness. At present, either she had not heard the precise character of the charge brought against him, or she utterly discredited it; but, since no one knew it to be true better than did the Captain himself, he was persuaded that long before a year had elapsed his lady-love would have been fully enlightened, and would be in quite another mind regarding him. It was now or never for him. He must prevail upon her to elope with him or give her up altogether. Accordingly he had told Rachel without circumlocution, which was not at all needed in her case, that it was an elopement which must be managed. On this point he spoke out clearly and decidedly, but not in the least "like a desperado."

"He will go to America, as sure as my name is Rachel Somers," said the waiting-maid, returning to the charge. "To see a fine man like that go off with a broken heart, to get killed, is enough to make one cry;" and Rachel sniffled a little, and got out her handkerchief. "I know what I

would do if I was a young lady," she added, wiping one eye, which was quite innocent of a tear, "and I had a fine man at my feet like that."

Emma did not ask what she would do, but she well understood what the girl meant. It was the first time that the idea of a runaway match had been brought distinctly before her mind. Had it indeed come to that?



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DUPES AND VICTIMS.

It was arranged that on Tuesday Mrs. Wyndham should take her brother into the City, where he had some business to transact. On the way home she would do some shopping with her girls; a few preparations were needed before they left London.

But one girl did not choose to go; as she had no longer the excuse of the practising for the party, Emma pleaded a headache. "The crowd in the City will drive me crazy," she said; "and I am not up to shopping. Gertrude knows what I want." So Emma was indulged, and the more readily as to Mrs. Wyndham her youngest daughter was at present the most acceptable companion. Gertrude was never ill-humoured and never complained, although she was rather sad on this occasion at the prospect of bidding farewell to her uncle and at Tyrell's impending departure.

On the same day another inmate of the house went into the City; only she went in an omnibus, not in the carriage. This was Mary Tidman. She had cried a good deal when she first received warning, particularly as only a week was left for her to look out for another London situation; but Tyrell

had succeeded in persuading her that to return to the country was, any way, the wisest thing she could do. Mary's family lived on the skirts of a small country town ; they were respectable people, and well known to their neighbours. Mary had kind friends there, and in particular the priest, who was sure to interest himself in her behalf. Doubtless she would easily find a place, and Mrs. Wyndham would, of course, give her a character. So Mary dried her tears. There was nothing much to regret in her present situation, since her friend, Mrs. Tyrell, was leaving also. Rachel she disliked, and Rachel disliked her ; and even James, with whom she was friendly and confidential, was and could be nothing more, for she was aware that he had a "young woman" of his own with whom he was "keeping company," and with whom he regularly took a walk every Sunday evening. After all, she would not be sorry to return to the country.

But what took Mary into the City ? She went to the savings' bank, to draw three-pound-ten, which, by the help of Tyrell's good advice and kind offices, she had been able to deposit there. Tyrell had helped the girl to make her gowns at home, had cut them out for her, had encouraged her to be economical, and to mend and darn small holes before they became large ones. She had also taught her to save up her best clothes, never to wear them while at her work, and to dispense with what she did not absolutely require. Without this motherly superintendence, poor Mary would probably have left her place without having saved five shillings out of her wages. Now she had three-pound-ten in her pocket, or believed she had, when she came home from her expedition. "Here it is, Mrs. Tyrell, and a few shillings' interest besides," she said triumphantly, as she fumbled after her purse. Presently she got very red and proceeded hastily to extract the whole contents of her pocket ; after which she turned it inside out and looked

aghast. "It is gone!" she cried: then the poor girl threw herself on one of the kitchen chairs and burst into tears. Mrs. Tyrell could not at first pacify her sufficiently to extract any account of where she had been since she received her money. "I have been nowhere," she sobbed out at last, "only in the 'bus. I haven't been to no shop, nor even taken out my purse since I put it in my pocket at the bank."

"Were there many people in the omnibus?"

"Yes, it was nearly full most of the way. People got in and out."

"Who was next you?"

"A very civil gentleman. It couldn't be him; he was very civil, and talked a good bit to me quite polite, and opened the window for me, for it was stiflicating, the 'bus was. There was a woman on the t'other side, but it couldn't well be her, for she'd her arms full of a babby. Besides, my pocket wasn't on that side."

"Did you talk to her at all?"

"I noticed the babby once."

"And there was this gentleman on the other side of you, and next your pocket?"

"But, Mrs. Tyrell, he was quite a gentleman. Bless you, he had as good a coat on as Mr. Algernon wears!"

"The coat does not make the gentleman, nor the honest man either. But I do not say he took your purse. Was the omnibus crowded when you got out? Had you to squeeze past a good many?"

"No, there was very few then. That gentleman got out at Regent-street, and a lot more passengers besides. There was no squeezing when I got out, and I gathered my petticoats round me. O dear! O dear! what am I to do? I shall go home with scarce a sixpence in my pocket when I've paid my fare;" and Mary's tears flowed afresh.

Mrs. Tyrell pitied her from her heart; she went away for a moment and, then speedily returning, placed three

sovereigns and ten shillings in Mary's hand. "That will make up your lost sum," she said.

"No, no, Mrs. Tyrell, I cannot ; indeed I cannot ; it is too much ; I know you are not rich."

"I am as rich as I wish to be," replied Tyrell, who would not hear of taking the money back either in whole or in part. Had Mary known that the bestowal of this gift left the donor with just one pound and eighteenpence in the world, and that, unlike her, she had no home to which she could return, she would certainly not have accepted it ; as it was, she was very thankful, and was aware that the sacrifice must be great, although she was ignorant of its extent. She at first insisted on considering the money as a loan, which she was to repay when able.

"No, Mary," said her friend, "that, indeed, would be a very poor kindness. This debt would hang about you as a weight, and would either prove a serious inconvenience to you or become a burden on your conscience. No, there must be no debt."

"What can I say ? What can I do ?" exclaimed Mary.

"Say nothing, my good girl, but I will tell you what you can do."

"What is it, Mrs. Tyrell ? There is nothing I would not do to please you, and show you that I am not ungrateful."

"Keep, then, in mind the advice I have given you ; it is worth incomparably more than those few coins ; and, if you will do this, I shall feel repaid more than a thousand-fold. Love God and obey His commandments ; do not be satisfied with trying to escape hell, but seek to do His will in all things. Let that be your first object—not to get a comfortable place, or a kind mistress, or to win the good opinion of those about you, or to avoid annoyances. Don't be always dreading blame, or fancying that extra work is going to be laid upon you, or fretting at the imperfect tempers of those about you. It may seem reasonable to

think a good deal of all these things, but it is of no use, and all this hoping and fearing keeps God out of our thoughts. My dear Mary, we shall never know true peace or rest till we brush all these anxieties away and seek God alone." Then she kissed Mary, who shed a few more tears and promised she would try to do better.

Mrs. Wyndham took her brother into the City, as she had proposed, accompanied by Gertrude. "It seems like coming to the end, John," she observed.

"It does indeed ; when one begins to make preparations one feels already half on the go." Then Sanders repeated in a more serious manner his proposal that Gertrude should return with him, and get the benefit of a Sicilian climate during the winter.

"You are very kind, John, I am sure, but her father, I know, would not part with her for so long, or allow her to go to such a distance from us, even if I could make up my mind."

Her father's objections, it will be remembered, had been put forward on the previous occasion, but it must be owned that the refusal was now made in a different temper. Mrs. Wyndham, although not prepared to accede, did not feel the repulsion to the very idea which she had experienced the first time it had been broached. Ever since Sir Philip had vouchsafed to call her brother a "brick," and had twice declared his intention of paying him a visit, a change of sentiment had come over her. The Vincents, too, girls of as much refinement as her own, had been unaffectedly pleased with this homely brother of hers ; neither did it count for nothing in the value she had begun to set upon him, that he was the possessor of two villas, one of which he had himself built, and a couple of large vineyards. When people become men of substance, and have a consequent position in public estimation, their defects and shortcomings assume a different character in the eyes of a large

class of persons ; and to this class Mrs. Wyndham certainly belonged.

After this she talked of their own plans, of the coming election, and the desirability of retrenchment. " I shall not take the carriage to the seaside," she said ; " as the horses are job ones, we shall save all the stable expenses while we are away ; and I shall leave the coachman and his wife in charge of the house. Bowles wants a holiday to see his friends ; Roper goes with us ; and Rachel and James will follow us to the seaside ; the others are leaving."

" Then, of course, you will not be in London when I come back from the north at the end of August ?"

" Certainly not *then* ; we shall probably be at Dover, where we shall take a small house ; but you can visit us there on your way equally well."

Gertrude listened in silence to these details, and thought that Emma was right in her conviction that there was no real intention on her mother's part to return to London at all after the visit to Gorsham, although she might not see good to announce the unwelcome truth at once. Yet Gertrude did not suspect any *plot* in arrangements which could be easily accounted for on financial grounds. Emma's temper was also reason enough for concealment. Perhaps—indeed there could be little doubt—her mother was glad of this opportunity to keep her out of Captain Baines's way, but the removal had not, she was sure, been planned on that account ; the notion had its origin in Emma's excited brain.

While the poor unsuspecting mother was talking over her domestic arrangements and, after depositing her brother, was engaged in shopping with her youngest daughter, the elder was holding her clandestine interview with her lover. He had watched for the departure of the carriage, and Rachel, as soon as it drove off, had been on the look-out for him. As she discerned him approaching from her

station at one of the bedroom windows, she slipped down quietly to the hall-door, having taken the precaution previously of putting on her oldest and most noiseless shoes. She admitted him without a word, and then, leaving him to find his way up-stairs—he already knew where he was to find his lady-love—she went below to make a talk and distract attention from any casual sound, keeping a special watch over Mrs. Roper's movements, she being the only one of the servants who was likely to intrude on Miss Wyndham's supposed solitude. But Mrs. Roper was sitting with Mrs. Tyrell, for whom her friendship was unbounded ever since the late occurrence, and whose departure was now so imminent that she would not willingly lose a moment of her society. Mr. Bowles was in his pantry, and Mary was snuffing over her work in the kitchen. After ascertaining these points, and making some occasional noise by fidgetting about, Rachel returned to the upper portion of the house, taking care to shut close the door at the top of the kitchen stairs ; she then fetched her bonnet and shawl, and stationed herself on the first landing-place above the drawing-room floor to watch for the Captain's egress. Rachel had no doubt of his success ; such a girl as she was would be sure to have no doubt ; he had come to persuade Miss Wyndham to consent to a runaway match, and it was in the natural course of things that she *should* consent. Then Rachel mused agreeably upon what might be her own prospects, and the rewards to which she would be entitled in payment of her devoted services. After a while she began to get rather nervous about discovery, and to think the process of persuasion a very long one.

Emma also had been convinced that her lover's object was to prevail upon her to elope with him, but she had resolved, with much more vigour than Rachel could possibly have imagined, that she would not consent to such a step. She was determined to take her stand immovably on her

own proposition. If Captain Baines truly loved her, would he not wait a year for her? Certainly he would, if he saw that he could not move her to relent. She did not ask herself what she would do in the event of his persisting in his resolution of going and getting himself killed in the service of the Argentine Republic, for there could be no question but that he would yield this point at her desire, and await her majority. Captain Baines also had resolved—assuredly not to go and get himself killed if Emma would not consent to an immediate marriage, but to hold firm, and play his part out to the end, leaving her, if necessary, under that impression. His was a desperate game; he knew this well enough, and that, if he could not carry off his prize now, it was lost to him for ever. So it was, then: the two wills were pitted against each other; and the strongest would triumph.

I do not purpose to give a detailed account of the interview, and this, I think, the reader will scarcely regret, seeing that he can take small interest in a love-affair of such a description; or, rather, the sole interest he can feel must be from a desire that the poor foolish girl should escape from the toils of an unprincipled schemer. Armed with her previous determination and, as I have already said, recoiling instinctively from the step to which her lover desired to urge her, Emma offered a much stronger resistance both to arguments and entreaties than he had by any means anticipated. If he trusted her fidelity, why could he not wait a year? That was her strong point. She was willing to go against her parents' wishes for the love of him; surely that was much; he might be content with that promise. But she would not steal away from her father's house in the dead of night, to break their hearts, perhaps, and be the talk of the whole town the next day. Baines felt that all was lost if he, on his part, did not make show of an equal determination. He must bring up his great piece of artillery

and point it, and, if that failed, then nothing remained for him but to retire and confess himself beaten. Accordingly, he rose from the sofa on which they were both sitting, with a changed countenance, and confronted her. In a few words, in which he now mingled no accents of tenderness, he reminded her of his circumstances ; he was almost a penniless man, bereaved of all his worldly prospects, mainly because he had committed what most people would style a gross indiscretion by apparently neglecting the very person on whom all his hopes depended, to follow a vain and delusive hope. But he did not reproach her, nor did he even blame himself ; he could not have acted otherwise than he had done, and he knew that he must pay the penalty. Yet to remain on in England, without money and without employment, he would not and could not do ; he must disappear from the scene, and release her from an engagement which probably she would learn soon to regret. Every motive, every argument, every calumny which could be invented, would be brought to bear upon her to induce her to give him up, and he would therefore neither permit her to bind herself by a promise nor expose himself to a second and still bitterer disappointment. One alternative certainly had remained ; an honourable position had been offered to him, such a position as he could without blushing ask her to share with him, but its acceptance implied that she must at once become his wife. This she refused to do, nor did he complain of her for her refusal. She was but acting according to the dictates of what the world would call prudence ; he had therefore no more to say, but to bid her an eternal farewell. He pronounced all this firmly, in a very dreary tone, but still with an unfaltering voice, acting his part well, it must be confessed, and not too dramatically. He then walked straight to the door, gave her one parting desolate look ; he was certainly going, and he would have gone had his shot failed ; but it had not failed. Emma

started from the sofa, rushed to the door, and laid her hand on his, which had half turned the handle. Then he knew that he had won the victory ; and, as if seized by an irrepressible impulse, he ventured to clasp her in his arms and call her his "own Emma." Emma quickly disengaged herself, and, returning to the sofa, buried her face in her hands, and cried bitterly. Seating himself again by her side, the Captain addressed to her some soothing words, and then she was able to discuss the subject more calmly.

Emma was conscious, after the weakness she had betrayed, of not being able to resume her former decided attitude. She had to descend to the feebler defence of remonstrance. "How can I do such a thing? How can you ask me to do it?" she plaintively exclaimed. "To leave my home with one who is not my husband, and to travel with him, cross the sea with him, and every one to know that I have done this thing—the remembrance of it will fill me with shame as long as I live!"

Captain Baines, seeing where the difficulty lay, and that it was more her womanly pride and regard for her reputation than any strong sense of duty which stood in his way, at once addressed himself to the task of divesting the proceeding of all its most offensive features. It was not an elopement, he emphatically declared ; never would he have proposed to her anything which could ever so slightly infringe on the most delicate feelings of propriety. Not two hours would have elapsed before he had placed her under the protection of a lady who was his dear and intimate friend ; and during that short interval he would not be alone with her even for one moment. She would have her maid as her companion, and he would simply have the honour of escorting her. His friends were about to sail at once for Norway in their yacht ; there would be no travelling about ; and she would not leave their company except as his wife. Then

Emma seemed to waver, and he again brought up or, at least, gave her a glimpse of the muzzle of his great gun. Of course, he continued, he would not and could not urge her to take this step. He had no brilliant prospects to offer to her. He had lost the rich inheritance which he had valued mainly for the hopes of sharing it with her; he had also lost the annuity which he used to receive from his uncle, who had simply bequeathed him five hundred pounds; he had nothing more than a competence and a devoted heart to offer to her. Doubtless, the world held out to her a far brighter fortune. Riches would be laid at her feet, though none could love her better than he had done. Perhaps, after all, it was well that he should sacrifice himself, and leave her to a grander destiny; and then he made a movement to rise again. But Emma remembered what she had felt when he had his hand on the door ready for departure, and knew that she had not the resolution to let him go; so she detained him, and at last she gave a faint acquiescence.

Baines, knowing how sensitive she was on the point of honour, and what value she would attach to having passed her word, was not satisfied until he had extracted from her a decided promise. Then he drew a ring from his little finger, and, taking her hand, placed it on the finger which would receive the wedding-ring. "You are now my betrothed," he said; and then he left her. He was too wise to enter into any particulars with her respecting the flight. These were reserved for Rachel. That damsel followed him downstairs and let him out, remaining a minute at the hall-door without closing it; after which she, too, went out, shutting it now audibly after her.

Baines had done wisely in insisting on a solemn promise from Emma's lips, for, after he was gone, and she had sat for a few minutes in a state of bewildered excitement, a terrible reaction began to set in. Had she given only a faint and

general acquiescence, which would not, she thought, have bound her in honour, as now she considered herself bound, I feel certain that she would have recoiled from the act to which she had rashly consented. Previous to that consent, and while the matter depended on her will, it seemed dreadful to part with her lover; insufferable to go to Gorsham and then to the seaside, with no hope of ever seeing him again; intolerable that her affections should be sacrificed to the prejudices of her family; but now that she had consented to give up all for him, it seemed dreadful to abandon her home and fly from her unsuspecting parents and her gentle, loving sister. When she thought of the carriage bringing back her mother and Gertrude, with unconscious smiling countenances, she felt as if her heart would almost break. But the die was cast, and it was too late to repent. So, at least, thought the unhappy girl. Then she looked at her ring; it gave her no pleasure. It was formed of two consecutive circlets which fitted into each other, two hands being joined together, with a motto, *Fidélité*. Yes, she was tied and bound by her own tongue, and here was the pledge that she must make good her word, and be faithful to her promise. Then she took the ring off and concealed it in her pocket.



CHAPTER XXXIX.

FORSAKEN AND FORSAKING.

WEDNESDAY was the day for Tyrell's departure. Mrs. Wyndham had settled the accounts on Monday, and had then paid her what was due of her wages, but this small amount had been nearly all expended, partly in helping to

make up Mary's loss and partly in a few necessary purchases for herself ; so that, as already stated, the overplus was just one pound, one shilling, and sixpence. It had been Mrs. Tyrell's intention, in the first instance, to go into a lodging and look out for a new situation. Mrs. Wyndham had promised to give her a character, and she hoped to hear of a place, either by means of the priests attached to Farm Street or through the nuns of the House of Mercy in Little Union Place, Blandford Square. These latter she knew also would, with proper recommendations, take in destitute women out of place ; but she expected to be able to support herself without having recourse to charity. Her first idea had been to inquire for the situation of house-keeper to a priest, a situation for which she was eminently qualified, and which would have satisfied all her own wishes. But this very reason induced her, on reflection, to renounce the project of seeking it. Mrs. Tyrell considered herself called to the vocation of service, not to make a living in as comfortable a way as was compatible with the position, but in order to attain to the perfection for which she was designed ; and something seemed to whisper to her that God would bring her to that perfection through the crosses incident to a life of domestic service. Far should it be from her, therefore, to choose or indulge a preference, and, by so doing, escape in part from those very trials which were needed to complete the work of God in her soul. Long ago had she placed herself in His hands, like clay in those of the potter, and she would never withdraw this act of renunciation. So she would leave herself to His providence as to the selection of a situation, and, if the next should prove, as this last had proved, rather uncongenial, she would welcome it, nevertheless, as His appointment.

Her present condition now made a change of plan necessary as respected the seeking of a lodging, and she must turn her thoughts at once towards the House of Mercy.

She remembered that one sovereign was required on admission ; she possessed that necessary sum and eighteenpence over and above ; what other conditions were required for admission she did not remember, but she concluded that there must be satisfactory recommendations, at least, from some priest to whom the individual was known. These she knew she could procure, and, as she did not wish to let any one in the house know her destination, since it would have entailed the discovery of her voluntary self-impoverishment in behalf of Mary, she did not like to apply to Mrs. Wyndham for a testimonial. Doubtless, she might be received on the priest's recommendation at once, as this would be a security that anything further that might be required would also be forthcoming on application.

After seeing Mary off on the Wednesday morning, Mrs. Tyrell made her own short preparations. Leaving her box packed ready to follow her, she reserved a few necessary articles to put in a basket which she could carry on her arm. She could not take the box with her, or afford a cab to convey it, had she even known whither she was going. "I suppose," she said to Mrs. Roper, "that my box can remain here until I either fetch or send for it?"

"Yes, of course, and I will tell Jervis and his wife about it. We go to-morrow, you know. But, dear Mrs. Tyrell, where are you going to-day yourself?"

"I shall go to a friend's house in the first instance," she replied, "and abide by the advice I receive."

"Well, I am glad you have a friend in London and an adviser ; not but that you deserve to have many friends, only you keep yourself so quiet ; no one knows you, or knows of you—at least, I thought not."

"This friend knows me well, and I can depend upon him."

Gertrude seized an unobserved moment to come and bid Tyrell adieu, which she did with tears in her eyes. "We

shall see you sometimes, Mrs. Tyrell, I hope, when we return to town," she said kindly and almost affectionately. "I am *so* sorry you are going. You will pray for me, will you not?"

"Indeed I will, my dear young lady, and may God bless and direct you in all His ways, and your dear sister, too. You must watch over her like her good angel, Miss Gertrude."

"But she is my elder sister."

"No matter; she loves the world better than you do, and the world is a dangerous place. You love her dearly, I know."

"That I do. I could not love her better."

"We can always learn to love better—to love more rightly; love her rightly, dear Miss Gertrude." She said this with some emphasis, while pressing the hand which was extended towards her. Gertrude noticed the almost transparent whiteness of the thin fingers, remarkable in a person whose life was one of daily toil, but she had time only to bid a hasty adieu, for she heard her mother's voice above, and, fearing that her affectionate leave-taking with the cook would find small acceptance in her eyes, she hastened upstairs and took refuge in the dining-room, before Mrs. Wyndham had descended far enough to notice her daughter emerging from the kitchen stairs.

"Love her rightly," Gertrude repeated to herself. There was a sort of insight and almost prescience in Tyrell's remarks which made Gertrude always regard them somewhat in the light of oracles. "Love her rightly." Did she love her sister rightly? Had she loved her rightly? What was it to love rightly? and then Gertrude fell to musing.

Mrs. Tyrell left the house before the servants' dinner hour; Mrs. Jervis, the coachman's wife, having come in to supply her place in the culinary department for the last

remaining day, as well as to make herself generally useful. Tyrell, then, went forth with her basket on her arm, and directed her steps to the Friend's House. The reader need scarcely be informed who the Friend was from whom she was going to seek counsel. She repaired to the Jesuits' church, and there she remained in silent prayer before the altar for about an hour, after which she rose from her knees, and went to the clergy house in Hill Street to ask for the Father who acted as her spiritual director. She was told that he was not at home, and might not be back until the evening—perhaps not before six o'clock. Mrs. Tyrell, not being known to any of the other priests, could not apply to them for her testimonial, so she turned away from the door, reflecting what she had best do. The usual hour for dinner was now approaching, but, should she not obtain admission that evening into the House of Mercy, she would have to look out for her night's lodging; so must economize her eighteenpence. Besides, she was not at all hungry, which, under the circumstances, might have been considered as fortunate, had not the disinclination to eat proceeded from indisposition. For, in fact, Mrs. Tyrell felt very far from well; but this she scarcely noticed, not being in the habit of adverting to her own sensations. She had first made the resolution of never speaking of them, a sacrifice which to many persons is a hard one, but without which they, at least, will never achieve the further triumph of not dwelling upon them inwardly. Mrs. Tyrell had accomplished both victories, and she found her reward in that peculiar freedom of the spirit from being oppressed by the sufferings of its bodily companion which we see exhibited in so striking a manner in the saints. Never stopping, therefore, to pity herself or think about herself, she now proceeded to the House of Mercy in the neighbourhood of Blandford Square. She must fill up the time somehow, and this seemed to be the best way. Perhaps the

nuns might admit her when she stated her case, and the reason why she had been unable to provide herself, as yet, with the necessary recommendation.

But she was not admitted. These institutions have their rules by which, of course, they must abide ; and one of the imperative conditions of admission was that an applicant should produce a satisfactory recommendation from her spiritual director as well as from the family with whom she last lived.

“ My late mistress, Mrs. Wyndham,” said Tyrell, “ leaves town to-morrow morning. I only quitted her service to-day, and I should not like to trouble her this afternoon. I could, however, obtain a testimonial from her, in a day or two, by writing to her ; do you think that in the meantime a letter from Father —— certifying the truth of what I state about myself would procure me admission at once ? ”

The Sister thought that possibly it might. Then Tyrell once more resumed her perambulation of the streets, than which, thronged as they may be, and all the more so when thronged, no solitude can be more desolate to the friendless ; but Tyrell never felt desolate, because she never felt friendless. The streets, however, were not thronged, at least not in that part of London, but they looked very damp and dismal, for it was raining, and after that steady fashion which bespeaks a continuance. Evidently a wet afternoon had set in. A kind of faintishness had now begun to steal over the poor woman, who, thinking it might proceed from exhaustion, bought herself a penny roll. But the bread seemed to turn to sawdust in her mouth ; she could not eat, and bestowed her morsel on a ragged old man. Then she went into the chapel in Spanish Place ; here she could find rest for both body and spirit ; and here she remained praying before the Blessed Sacrament, and before the image of Mary, until six o'clock or thereabouts, when she set off

again for the house of the Jesuit Fathers. But here she was doomed to meet with a fresh disappointment. Father —— had been in during her absence, but had been called away since ; the youth who answered the bell believed that it was to some sick person who lived at a distance ; at any rate, Father —— had said that he did not think he should be back before eight o'clock. It was now evident that Mrs. Tyrell must seek a lodging for that night, but, feeling too faint and weary to undertake any immediate search, she again entered the church in Farm Street for the double purpose of repose and of prayer.

She had not been there, however, very long before she was seized with a shivering fit, and, believing it to be owing to her wet clothes, she thought that she had better move about in order to dry them, in a measure, for it had now almost ceased raining, and also to get some warmth into her frame. At first she felt somewhat revived in the open air, and, with the view of obtaining a seat, she made her way into the Park, which she found emptied of company by the recent rain. The benches shone with wet, but she was so utterly exhausted by this last exertion that she was glad to be able to sit down anywhere. It soon recommenced raining, and she felt too weak even to hold up her umbrella. Whether in this state she dozed or simply forgot herself she could not tell, but after a while she came to herself again, only to realize all the discomforts and difficulties of her position. She had a great sense of numbness all over her, and she felt that it was increasing ; she must therefore return at once to Hill Street, or she might soon lose the power of moving. Accordingly she made an effort to rise, but her head swam, her strength failed her, and she sank back on the bench. Making a secret aspiration, and summoning all her remaining powers, she once more endeavoured to regain her feet ; again there was the sense of swimming in her head, accompanied this time by a nearly total oblite-

ration of surrounding objects ; she fell back, and all consciousness forsook her. . . .

The evening in Berkeley Square was a very quiet one. Mrs. Wyndham was tired with packing, or, rather, with superintending the packing. Mr. Wyndham was low in spirits ; he was musing over the unsatisfactory state of his affairs. Sanders was cheerful ; he always was cheerful ; but he felt that this was the last evening they were to sit down together, perhaps, for many a long day. He was of an affectionate disposition, and loved them all in a way, while Gertrude had become very dear to him. The approach of the moment for parting had accordingly a subduing effect upon him. Gertrude was depressed on several accounts, and particularly at the thought of losing her uncle. And poor Emma—she was the saddest of all inwardly, and with good reason. No one expected her to be gay with her London season brought to this abrupt close, and neither her mother nor her sister would have been the least surprised had she been very ill-humoured and very captious ; but this was by no means the case. She was extremely dejected, and rather absent in manner, but, so far from manifesting any asperity, there was a kind of gentleness mingled with her sadness which was quite unusual with her. Both Mrs. Wyndham and Gertrude noticed this circumstance, and so did Uncle John, who always noticed everything, being in this respect the antipodes of his brother-in-law, who was very unobservant in his domestic circle unless something occurred to ruffle or annoy him.

The anxious mother feared that Emma was not well after the unpleasant scene which occurred at breakfast on the previous day ; her displeasure, which never lasted long against any of her children, had soon passed away, and a reaction of compassion in favour of the offender had set in, a reaction strengthened by the unusual mildness of Emma's

bearing. "My dear, I am sure you are tired," she said ; "you look pale and fagged ; you must go and get some beauty sleep."

Alas for poor Emma ! she was not likely to sleep much either before or after the midnight hour, but she must go up to her room before her sister, so availed herself of this remark to retire. When she approached to kiss her mother, the thoughts which rushed upon her were well-nigh overwhelming. Emma was not tender-hearted, not even what is generally called warm-hearted, but few there are who have not more heart somewhere within their bosoms than others give them credit for, or even they themselves suspect. The heart is overlaid and suffocated, rather than wanting. So Emma had a heart, and she was painfully aware at that moment that she had one. But she must stifle all emotion ; so she kissed her mother, and then looked round at her father, who was in his arm-chair. She must kiss him, too ; perhaps it would be the last loving kiss which he would ever permit her to give him.

"Don't disturb your father, dear," said Mrs. Wyndham, "he has just dropped off asleep."

Emma felt a pang of disappointment as she turned away. Her eyes now rested on her uncle, and a softened feeling towards him came over her which she had never before experienced. "Then," she said, "I must kiss you, uncle."

This was the first time she had ever kissed him, and he knew it. He had kissed her on his arrival : that was all. His kind heart was moved at once, and he responded affectionately to the unexpected caress. "Good bless you, my dear child," he said.

Emma murmured something inaudible in return, and then hastily left the room.

"Poor Emma !" ejaculated Uncle John, half to himself, half to the others.

"Yes, poor dear," replied the mother; "Emma does not like leaving town."

But Uncle John did not think it was quite, or at least wholly, that. He was at a loss to know what it exactly was, but it was not that. "Poor Emma!" he might well say. She was about to leave all that she had ever loved, and the warm nest in which she had been reared and cherished—for whom and for what? Happier by far she who was lying on the damp ground, forsaken of all, with not a friend to claim her living or mourn her dead!



CHAPTER XL.

FLIGHT AND PURSUIT.

GERTRUDE lingered on that evening until the whole party retired for the night, in order to see as much of her uncle as she could. Emma profited by this time to make her necessary arrangements. She found Rachel awaiting her in her room. Under cover of the general packing that damsel had no difficulty in accomplishing the needful preparations. She had also asked for and obtained a week's holiday, to visit a sister of hers who lived in London, and this furnished her with an excuse to pack and remove her own box in the course of the day, saying that she meant to go early, and the box would be out of the way. She then put a few things belonging to Miss Wyndham in a lined wicker basket such as she could herself carry. About its contents there was a short discussion with her young mistress. Emma would take none of her jewellery, reserving only two brooches—the one containing a lock of her father's and mother's hair, and the other the butterfly given her by her uncle. She also turned out some handsome Mechlin and

Brussels lace which Rachel had put in the basket on her own responsibility. "But it is your own, ma'am," said the girl. "Law! you are stripping yourself of everything."

"I am robbing them of myself," replied Emma, "but I will not be a plunderer. These things were not given me to carry off in this way. Mama can send them to me if she likes. Quick! take them out, Rachel; I never told you to put them in."

Rachel was compelled to obey. "Dear me, Miss Wyndham!" she exclaimed, "I don't like to see you so sad. It is not like a bride that you look at all!"

"Such a bridal!" said Emma with a sigh, which was almost a groan.

"But all will come right," continued Rachel, as she tied down the basket, endeavouring still to convey comfort as best she could. "All will come right, you may depend. Those things always does come right. What's done is done. Papas and mamas knows that; and then they forgive. You and the Captain will throw yourselves at their feet quite touching——"

"Don't talk to me, Rachel," said Emma, interrupting her with a kind of nervous impatience; "I cannot stand it; only tell me what is necessary, and then leave me."

The waiting-woman, thus cut short in her eloquence, limited herself, as she was bid, to making her mistress understand what she was to do; the rest had all been, or would be, provided for. Miss Wyndham was to leave her room at four o'clock; she would find her ready in the hall with the wicker basket. Then Rachel, after suggesting a few cautions, departed, but not to take any rest as yet. She lingered up until the servants had all gone to bed. The men slept below, and were sure to hear nothing as soon as they were well off to sleep. It was a great piece of good luck, in Rachel's estimation, that Mr. Sanders had chosen to remain in his attic, saying that, as he was going so soon,

it was not worth the trouble of moving him to his former bedroom on the ground floor. Rachel judged rightly that Mr. Sanders had good ears, and she had something to do which would make a certain degree of noise, however carefully she might perform the operation, not to speak of the sounds, slight as they might be, which the exit of two persons from the house at four o'clock in the morning must entail. Rachel then proceeded to undraw the two bolts of the hall-door. The key she knew was in a drawer of the hall table ; this fact she ascertained, and oiled it that it might turn easily. Then she deposited the wicker basket on a chair in the hall, and crept up to bed.

Emma, left to herself, had taken off her evening gown, but retained all the rest of her clothing that she might not have to put on more than her morning dress and shawl when she rose. Then she drew the bed-clothes over her, and when Gertrude came up she feigned sleep ; but sleep was far from her eyelids most of that night, nor did she wish to sleep. She tried to think of the life of happiness before her, as she hoped ; of her affianced husband, his devotion to her, his disinterestedness—but it would not do ; other thoughts were in the ascendant, and drove away all her visions of bliss. Yet about three o'clock she did fall asleep, and then awoke with a start, fearing she had let the appointed hour go by. It was daylight, of course ; she looked at her watch and saw that it still wanted a quarter to four ; so she quietly slipped on her morning attire and took her shawl. Her boots and bonnet she would put on below. Her own bed was near to the window, and she had to pass Gertrude's on her way to the door. Feeling herself impelled to take a look at the dear countenance, she held back the curtain which shaded her, and gazed at the sleeper wistfully for a moment. Her sister's face was flushed, she seemed to be suffering from a bad dream, her lips moving, though the eyes were closed ; she muttered something, and Emma, stooping over her,

thought she caught her own name. She had made no sound, but there is something in the very vicinity of another, something in the mere fact of an eye resting on the sleeper, which will have the effect of awakening, as by a strange magnetic influence. So Gertrude opened her large, soft, blue eyes; then Emma imprinted a kiss lightly on her forehead and slunk away to her bed again. She could not venture to leave the room at that moment, for her sister was half, if not fully, awake.

Gertrude, however, had not been sufficiently roused to full consciousness, but a minute after, coming to herself more completely, she recalled the vision of Emma up and dressed and bending over her; perhaps it was part of a painful dream which had disturbed her. So, to make sure, she called to her sister, "Emma, was that you?"

"Do you want anything, Gertrude?" replied her sister.

"No, nothing; only I fancied I saw you. I have been dreaming, I suppose;" and then she turned in her bed, and dropped off to sleep again.

After a short interval Emma rose once more. In the course of the night she had turned the handle of the door and left it ajar. There was a green baize one outside, which simply fell to. She was able, therefore, to leave the room quite noiselessly, taking her boots in her hand, and closing only this outer door. In the hall she found Rachel with the basket. Emma put on her boots and bonnet without uttering a syllable. Then they went out into the street, Rachel shutting the hall door, which she had previously unlocked, as noiselessly as she could. They had not been heard. Once the waiting-maid glanced back, and said, "All right, no one is coming." They soon reached Mount Street, where the cab was in waiting. We shall not follow them, but return to the sister's room.

Emma had not gone very long before Gertrude awoke, with the impression on her mind that she had heard some

sound while lying between asleep and awake. Whether it were really so, or that she had again been dreaming, the effect was an unaccountable sense of uneasiness. So she once more called to Emma, and asked her if she was awake, but, receiving no answer, concluded that she was asleep. It would be unkind to wake her; yet Gertrude felt so restless and disturbed that she would have been glad to be able to interchange a few words. So she sat up in bed, looked at her watch, and saw that it was nearly half-past four. How long that night seemed! Would that she could drop asleep again; but she felt too hot and feverish. Perhaps, if she took a turn in the room, it might cool and calm her. She got up, and, throwing her dressing-gown about her, went to the window. She was now very near Emma's bed, and observed that, contrary to her custom, for her sister was very fond of air, the curtains of the French bed, instead of being pushed back, were dropped quite close. Gertrude, thinking that they had slipped forward while her sister slept, gently drew the one nearest the head aside, and then she saw that the bed was empty. Her eyes instinctively wandered to the door; it was ajar. The terrible truth did not at once flash on the unhappy girl; she fancied that Emma, like herself, had been disturbed by some sound and had gone to listen; but this was but the illusion of a moment. On the dressing-table there lay a letter. "For Gertrude" was its sole direction. She saw it, she seized it, tore it open, read but the first line, and then, uttering a sharp cry, sank to the ground. She had fainted.

Now it so happened that Uncle John, whose attic was above the two sisters' room, was awake at that moment. He heard the faint shriek and the noise which followed, as of something falling, and lost not a minute in putting on his wrapper and slippers to go and see what was the matter. Opening the outer door of the girls' room, he found the inner one ajar, so entered at once. There lay poor Gertrude

on the floor. To raise her and sprinkle cold water on her face, in order to bring her to herself, was the work of an instant. But where was Emma? Her bed was forsaken—had she gone to seek help? but, if so, he would have met her as he came down. There was plainly something wrong, and, if the truth did not at once occur to him, it must be remembered that he was quite in the dark as to the attachment of Emma to Baines; even her preference for him as a partner in the dance never having been so much as hinted in his presence. He laid Gertrude on her bed, with her head propped up, rubbed her hands, and then looked about for some eau-de-Cologne, or aromatic salts, or whatever restorative might be at hand. While casting his eye about, he perceived the letter on the floor, picked it up and read it. There he had the terrible explanation of all:—

“My own dearest sister,—When you read this, I shall be far away. What it has cost me to keep my promise, I cannot tell you. Much as I love him, I never could have taken this step, I believe, but for my word which I had passed. So bitter are the prejudices against Frederick in my family, that I knew I never could get a hearing for him, and that it was hopeless to expect that I should ever be permitted to become his wife. I had meant to wait until I was of age, when, if Papa and Mama could not be prevailed upon to consent, I thought I should be free to choose my own lot; as it is, I am doing what I hate, and know to be wrong, but I must have lost him for ever had I refused. I cannot explain that now. I dare not write to my dearest mother; you must try and comfort her, my own dear Gertrude, and tell her, and Papa, too, how wretched I shall be till I can obtain their forgiveness.”

Gertrude now gave signs of returning consciousness. Sanders bathed her temples with some eau-de-Cologne, and presently she revived, gazed at her uncle, and then, clasping

her hands with a look of agony, exclaimed, "She is gone— Oh, save her!"

"Who is the villain? Can it be Baines?" he asked. Gertrude assented. It was with difficulty that Sanders restrained himself, but the fear of exciting his niece gave him self-command.

"O uncle!" said Gertrude, wringing her hands, "it is my fault. I knew she loved him, and, though I blamed her, I kept her secret. She might have been saved had I told."

"We will save her still, if possible," said Sanders, who could not, under the circumstances, reproach the poor girl with her weakness. He had soon arranged his plan. Fetching down Roper to take charge of his niece, he told her the whole truth, which, indeed, could not be concealed, but she was to keep it secret from every one in the house as long as she could. When the other servants got up, she was to say that Miss Gertrude had been taken ill in the night. "I never would have any one tell a lie, of course," said the good man; "but, if you can leave the impression that Miss Wyndham is with her sister, it will be well. For instance, if you have to take her up a cup of tea, you could take up two. There's no harm in that. Our poor fugitive is not gone much more than half an hour; and I may catch her up. That rascal never expected we should be on his track so early."

Mrs. Roper was troubled with few scruples as regarded strict veracity in an emergency, and was quite prepared to do much more than leave impressions. She was also sincerely attached to her two young ladies, so could be thoroughly relied upon for secrecy.

"And keep it from her poor mother as long as you can," added Sanders, who went up hastily to put on his clothes, after bidding Roper to bolt the hall-door before the household was astir, that there might be no evidence of its having

been opened. Then he bethought him that his brother-in-law had a latch-key, so he turned into his recent apartment, now restored to its usual use of a dressing-room for the master of the house. There he found Wyndham's coat and waistcoat, examined the pockets, and, to his great satisfaction, possessed himself of the key.

He forthwith hurried towards Piccadilly, down Berkeley Street. Gertrude had fortunately remembered the number of Baines's lodging. He was soon there, but had to knock and ring more than once before the door was opened, although there was evidently a movement above stairs, a window being raised and then re-closed. A middle-aged personage at last appeared. She must, however, have been up already, for sufficient time had not elapsed to allow of dressing.

"I wish to see Captain Baines before he leaves," said Sanders.

"He *has* left," replied the woman, making as if about to close the door.

"Stop a bit ; I must have his address. Where is he gone ? Of course you can tell me."

"The gentleman bid me tell any one as might ask after him that he was gone to Folkestone. He went *airly* thi morning."

"Very early, even if he went only five minutes ago," replied Sanders, who had managed to edge himself into the narrow passage ; "but he must have left some address, surely. He is not gone to stay at Folkestone ; I know better."

"I am sure I can't say ; that's all I can tell you."

"No, my good lady, it is not all you can tell me ; I am quite sure of that ; though it may be all you were bid to say. Are you the landlady ?"

"No, sir, not exactly. I am put in by the landlord to look after the lodging ; he never comes a'most."

"Now do you see this?" said Sanders, showing her a ten-pound note. "I will just tell you how you may earn this bit of paper very cheaply, and honestly too. Everybody is free to give his opinion. I know that this Captain is not gone to Folkestone, and I'll be bound you know as much too. Now just let me know where you really think he is gone."

"Well, sir, there can be no harm, certainly, in speaking out one's thoughts. I fancy he's gone down the river?"

"Why do you think so?"

"Because there's a gentleman, a lord he is, who has come here several times this last day or two, and I've heard them talking over their plans; at least—I caught bits."

"That's Lord Selden."

"O, you know him, sir. Please don't mention me."

"Never fear. So you think he's gone down the river with Lord Selden?"

Sanders had risen in the dame's estimation considerably since she found that he was familiar with lords. "His lordship, as, I dare say, you know, sir, has a yacht. He keeps it just now at Greenwich, and he has a villa there or thereabouts, at least so I gathered. I think he's about to go cruising, and is taking the Captain; they're great friends, he and the Captain."

"And you don't know the name of Lord Selden's villa or of his yacht?"

"No, sir, I don't know neither, or I would tell you."

Then Sanders gave her the ten-pound note, and set off for Blackwall. Here he hired a wherry to take him across to Greenwich. "What schooner is that getting up its sails?" he asked of his ferryman. "I see it belongs to the Royal Yacht Club."

"That's the *Empress*, Lord Selden's yacht. She's a neat craft."

"Is Lord Selden on board?"

"I think not, but I take it he'll be under way soon this morning. They've been very busy, the crew have, for this hour and more. We shall just pass under her bows." Then the man hallooed to the sailors, and inquired if his lordship was aboard.

No, he was not aboard, but was expected in about an hour's time. "Where shall I find him, do you suppose?" asked Sanders, to which question the individual, apparently, in command as lieutenant replied that Lord Selden was, no doubt, at his villa, Pearl Bank. After some further directions, Sanders bade the man pull as fast as he could for the shore.

CHAPTER XLI.

KATE SELDEN.

PEARL BANK was a pretty little villa situated on some rising ground, and commanding a view of the Thames from its lawn. The drawing-room had French windows opening out to a veranda, gay and sweet with flowers, and was furnished with luxury and taste. The breakfast things were ready on the table, notwithstanding the very early hour, for it was still very early. Two ladies occupied the apartment; one of them was engaged in ministering to the comfort and endeavouring to cheer the spirits of the younger of the two, who was seated on a sofa, with her bonnet, just taken off, lying by her, and on whose face were the traces of recent tears. This young lady was Emma Wyndham; the other was Lady Selden, generally known in the fashionable world, especially among men, as Kate Selden. It is a questionable compliment when ladies in the gay world are thus familiarly known by their Christian names; if sometimes

it is a sign that they are liked, it is sometimes also a sign that they are hardly respected as much as would be desirable. I fear this was true in the present case.

Kate Selden was rather tall and had a fine figure, not one of classical symmetry, but of extraordinary flexibility, which imparted to it a wonderful ease and grace. No one stepped better, no one sat a horse better, than did Kate Selden. She could ride to hounds as well as any man ; she could fire a rifle or steer a vessel. It was said that she also could smoke her cigarette, and I am inclined to believe it. There was nothing of this kind which Kate Selden could not do ; yet her manners and ways, free as they were, did not convey the impression of unfeminineness. Some women can be very masculine without being offensively so. Kate had not a face of regular beauty ; indeed, most women would have said that she was not at all pretty. The gentlemen, nevertheless, considered her as extremely attractive. It has often been said that women do not like to hear men praise the beauty of other women. This I believe to be a gross calumny, and it may have partly originated from the circumstance that the taste of women does not always coincide with that of men. There may be beauty so unquestionable as to unite the suffrages of all, men and women alike, but on the debatable ground there is a great divergence of opinion between them. Kate was one of the admired by men, but women saw very little to praise in her. Perhaps she took more pains to please men, though occasionally, from caprice or a private motive of her own, she would coax and pet some woman, and then she was sure to succeed. It is flattering to self-love to form an exception. But what Kate Selden loved was to be surrounded by admirers, and she accomplished her object. A married woman has facilities in this way which the unmarried lacks ; for should the husband not dislike seeing his wife the object of this species of courtship, admirers feel themselves on safer ground, since there can be

no question of ulterior intentions, the lady being already disposed of. Under these circumstances, if a married lady should happen to take a pleasure in a following of this description, a moderate degree of agreeability, enhanced by piquancy, a fair share of good looks, and the talent to manage these advantages, may abundantly suffice for the purpose. Kate Selden knew well how to use such advantages, and very ill-natured things in consequence were whispered of Kate, particularly as the lady, it was asserted, was greedy of presents. She was said to be heartless, and to encourage her admirers for the sake of the bracelets and rings, and other similar solid attentions, which she was so condescending as to accept at their hands.

If, however, the lady had limited herself to the bestowal of her smiles in a general way on a train of professed admirers, her reputation might have escaped further damage; but Kate liked, besides, to have one favoured devotee, with whom she might indulge in a little more play of heart, or the semblance of it. She had never been without such an appendage, and for the last two years Frederick Baines had filled this post. Kate liked him as well, perhaps, as she was able to like any one, but, above all, she liked to engross as much of heart as he had to give. Of course the slanderous world was not silent on this topic, but since, as Algernon once remarked, Lord Selden appeared to like Captain Baines full as much as did his wife, there might be said to be no legitimate ground of complaint. Kate Selden, on her part, cared very little what was said by the world, but she did care very much about keeping her devoted knight hanging on in attendance on her; when therefore, on her arrival in England, she learnt, and that from himself, that he had been greatly struck by Emma Wyndham, she was not pleased. She had the prudence, however, to conceal her annoyance, even when the Captain's flirtation assumed a serious character, and she found that he was contemplating

matrimony ; yet it was a bitter pill for her to swallow. True, her own marriage already separated her from this man, but *his* marriage would separate him from her—which was quite another thing—and it must do so. Kate, however, was one to take what she could get. In the worst case, and supposing he did marry, she might succeed in retaining him within the charmed circle of her smiles ; perhaps wile him back altogether by-and-by, when the monotonous happiness of domestic life should begin to oppress him with its flatness. But such a result entirely depended on her knowing how to accept with a good grace the place of *confidante*, and she did accept it with a very good grace, and acted out her character with a consummate art, professing to feel the deepest interest in the young creature who was to be the happy partner of the dearest friend she had on earth—so she called the worthy Captain to his face ; and moreover, when Lord Selden agreed to favour the elopement by carrying off the young couple in his yacht to Norway, his wife lent herself with apparent cordiality to the scheme, which was now, as we have seen, so far on its way to realisation.

“They do not know it yet,” said poor Emma, looking at her watch.

“O, no,” replied Kate, sitting down by her and taking her hand, which she stroked caressingly ; “we shall be far down the river, with this favourable breeze, before London ladies and gentlemen are stirring. What a dear little dimpled hand ! Now, I am sure, Frederick gave you that ring. I have seen it on his finger.”

“I was not thinking about pursuit or discovery,” said Emma, making no response as to dimples or ring. “I was thinking of what Mama and Papa will feel when they know all.”

“You must not think about that now ; what is the use ? Of course you have considered all that before. We look before we leap ; but, when we resolve upon vaulting over

the fence, we clear it without looking back. You made up your mind that you loved Frederick better than anybody else, and resolved on the leap. You are not the first who has done such a thing. Why are you to make yourself unhappy, dear Miss Wyndham? I am sure I should be very happy if I was going to marry Frederick Baines. He is the dearest man in the world!"

There was something in this open and, to all seeming, candid avowal of affection which almost startled Emma, and made her look up at her companion. "You have known him long, I suppose?"

"About two years, but it does not require very long to discover sympathies and affinities; we understood each other at once."

"If I did not hope to be happy with him," said Emma, "I could not certainly have resolved to go against Mama's wishes and grieve them all so much; but still I cannot help thinking about what they will suffer, and about what they will think of me."

"They will think you foolish and wrong, as a matter of course; if your father and mother had made a runaway match in their own youth, it would make no difference; they would vote it to be wrong in their daughter. That is the way of the world, or the way of parents, at least. But, tell me, what was their objection to Frederick? His want of means, I suppose?"

"I don't know what Mama's objection to him was. I think she had heard something to his disadvantage, but she knew nothing of our engagement, and Papa knew scarcely anything at all about him. Captain Baines had not time to come forward before he was made aware that there was this strong prejudice against him on the part of my mother and brother. He had delayed a declaration on account of his uncle's illness."

"What had that to say to it?" asked Lady Selden.
"What uncle do you mean?"

"His uncle in Yorkshire, from whom he had such large expectations. He did not think the moment propitious for talking to him about arrangements."

Lady Selden laughed. "I should think," she said, "that very few people shared these 'large expectations.' So like Frederick!"

Emma felt very uncomfortable at this remark. What was so like Frederick? Expecting without solid grounds, or making the most of groundless expectations? "But surely, Lady Selden," she replied, "he was regarded as the expected heir; and he so regarded himself. What do you know to the contrary?"

"Nothing at all, my dear; it is all right, no doubt, or, rather, all wrong, for the naughty uncle has died without making Frederick his heir. I really never saw or spoke to this very bad man in all my life; only I had not heard of the heirship *in petto*; that was all. But we won't regret it, for I do not think it would have suited Frederick to play the country squire. He is quite a town bird."

"I suppose we shall hardly be able to choose our place of residence, as rich people might," said Emma. "Indeed, I believe it is already arranged for us, through the kindness of friends. I am too bewildered, Lady Selden, to say all the grateful things I ought."

"My dear Miss Wyndham, we are delighted to be of any use in this romantic affair."

"Where are we going now?" inquired Emma.

"To Norway. We sail straight for Christiania, where you will be married; and we shall then leave you to make your wedding tour among the lovely scenery of that most lovely land. I quite envy you, and wish you would lend me your honeymoon. Well, I suppose I cannot expect that. We shall, of course, pick you up again when you have had enough of romance and roaming."

"And take us to Hamburg?"

"Yes, if you like it ; or anywhere else."

"But I thought it was at Hamburg we were to live, and that Captain Baines was to have the consulship there?"

"The consulship at Hamburg? Well, I do remember something of the sort, and that Augustus said he was sure he could get him a situation as consul, if he could make up his mind to the kind of thing. But I fancy there must be pleasanter places than Hamburg."

"Only it was to be Hamburg," insisted Emma in a pertinacious tone, for she was becoming alarmed by Lady Selden's vague way of dealing with prospects. "I was told the particulars, and that there was only one condition—that the new consul must be married, as the last had been too gay."

Kate Selden laughed again. "What a comical idea Did Frederick tell you this amusing fancy of the Hamburgers? It is certainly a credit to their propriety for entertaining it, or to Frederick's ingenuity for inventing it."

"Inventing it, Lady Selden!"

"Imagining it, then ; lovers are, you know, imaginative."

"It was not Captain Baines, however," replied Emma, gravely, "who told me that precise circumstance ; I remember that it was Mr. Jardine."

"O, Mr. Jardine!" exclaimed Lady Selden ; "that horrid man ! I cannot think what has made Frederick take him up as he has."

"He was his schoolfellow, and they have always been like brothers ; Mr. Jardine told me so himself."

"Mr. Jardine, my dear, is a man who cannot speak a word of truth. I hope you are not going to take him into fraternal relationship also, and that Frederick has not asked him to be his best man on the happy occasion. Seriously speaking, he really ought to get rid of him, even if they were twin brothers instead of only chance acquaintance. But we had better begin our breakfast. I am sure you

must have wanted it, Miss Wyndham. You have had nothing but that wretched cup of tea and a biscuit when you arrived. I will ring for the coffee and eggs. Augustus and Frederick must see after themselves; they will soon be back. I dare say. O, there, I see them coming up the lawn."

It would be difficult to describe Emma's state of mind at this moment; it was truly miserable; every word that Lady Selden had uttered had served to suggest nothing but the most horrible doubts, and had thrown her into an agonizing state of mistrust. What was true, and what was not true, in all that had been told her? Had she been the dupe of exaggerations and misrepresentations? or had her lover been the victim of preposterous illusions? She endeavoured to recall to mind what she had heard from himself directly, and what from Jardine only. For the illusion about the heirship, if it had been an illusion—she would not admit the dreadful idea of a lie—Frederick was certainly responsible; but how strange that so dear a friend as Lady Selden should be ignorant both of his previous hopes and of his recent disappointment! What would she not have given now for the opportunity of inquiry, before taking the rash step to which she had committed herself, and from which she could see no retreat! She had neither friend nor adviser to whom to turn. The unreasoning reliance on the truth and honour of her lover, which had been so firm and immovable while efforts had been made to shake it, seemed to waver now at the merely casual and careless observations of one who certainly did not desire to depreciate his merits. She had told Gertrude that love made the heart impervious to unworthy suspicions; but what had become of the love now! She supposed she loved this man; else, why was she there!—of course she loved him, but the sentiment of love had gone; indeed, although she had not reflected upon the change, all sentiment had well-nigh vanished from the

moment that reality had begun, from the moment that the fatal ring had been placed on her finger, and Baines had said, "You are now my betrothed."

The poor girl had mechanically moved to the breakfast-table at Lady Selden's invitation, and suffered herself to be helped to a cup of coffee. Then the gentlemen entered through the open window. "We have sent the two Abigails and the luggage on board," said Lord Selden; "that is more than half the battle. We have now nothing but ourselves to take down to the boat when we have dispatched our breakfast. What a heap of things there were. Kate! One would think we were going to found a colony in Norway. We shall probably not want half of them. Your box, or basket, Miss Wyndham, does not occupy much space, certainly."

"We must see to all this when we reach Christiania," said Lady Selden.

"I undertake the *trousseau*, remember that," continued her husband. "It shall be the best which that Arctic capital can furnish." Lord Selden was as fond of making presents as his wife was of receiving them.

"It is very nice being married and getting everything new," observed Lady Selden—"but you have not touched your egg, Miss Wyndham."

Emma had only been able to drink half of her cup of coffee; eating seemed beyond her, although Baines had been whispering some sweet encouragements on the subject. "She has gone through so much," he said. "I have no doubt she will revive when on board; anxiety takes away appetite."

"The sooner we get on board the better," said Lord Selden; "and it will be easy there to repair all deficiencies. The lockers of the *Empress*, Miss Wyndham, are full of every manner of good things; so you will have nothing to do but to eat and drink half the day, and lie on deck, to

get an appetite, or a succession of appetites, the other half."

"There is nothing like a yacht life," said Kate, "for an opportunity of enjoying the *dolce far niente*; idleness positively seems like activity; and then you get such a supreme contempt for the landsman; it is quite glorious. One feels very much as I can fancy the soaring bird or the gliding fish might feel about a miserable quadruped, which can only make its way step by step on the ground. And besides, you are so independent. The post cannot bring a disagreeable letter; no tiresome visitor can call; you escape from duties, proprieties, responsibilities, and everything else which is a bore in life."

How Emma would but a short time since have entered *con amore* into Lady Selden's sentiments! How her heart would have bounded at a picture of careless enjoyment so thoroughly to her taste! But now all was joyless to her, and the pleasures set before her, like the Dead Sea fruit, turned into ashes.

"What was that?" said Kate, as a shadow came between them and the light; "there is somebody in the verandah!"

The said body proceeded to step in unceremoniously through the open window. It belonged to a stoutish middle-aged man, of a medium height, who wore a decided and pugilistic air. In his hand he had a strong cane or, rather, stick, which he looked well able to use with effect; and not unlikely to do so, for there he stood before the company, confronting them like a defiant bull. This apparition produced very various effects on the party. Emma concealed her face in her hands; Captain Baines turned very white, and rose from his seat; Kate Selden was rather inclined to laugh, and her husband disposed to be angry.

"Who are you?" he said to the unpleasant intruder.

"My name is John Sanders," was the prompt and bold reply.

"Then, Mr. John Sanders, I would have you to know this is my house, and, if you do not take yourself off immediately, I will ring for my footman to put you out."

"I think he is a lunatic," whispered his wife.

"I am going to take myself off directly, Lord Selden, without your footman's help," replied Sanders; "but I shall take some one else along with me. That young lady is my niece; I am come to claim her in her father's name; she has been deceitfully allured from her home by that scoundrel; she is under age, and has therefore no right to give herself away to this blackguard without her parents' consent."

"I protest," exclaimed Baines, "against all that this man says, or may say, against me."

"Who is he?" asked Selden. "Did you ever see him before?"

"Captain Baines knows me well, and I know him well too, and he knows I know him," said Sanders.

"He is a Sicilian wine-merchant," replied Baines, "who goes about the world taking away my character."

"It is my uncle," sobbed Emma, still not daring to look up.

"At any rate, Mr. Sanders, you are not Miss Wyndham's father," said Lord Selden, speaking now more calmly than before; "nor do you seem to have any voucher to prove that you are empowered by him to interfere in this matter. You can yourself, as you must know, claim no authority personally over the young lady. Whether she be of age I cannot say, but I know that she has placed herself under my protection, and I shall not suffer her to be removed from my roof against her will."

"I am not going to discuss my credentials just now with you, my lord," said Sanders, in reply; "what I claim is five minutes' private conversation with my niece."

"If she consents to speak to you, I cannot object to the interview, of course," said Lord Selden.

"Don't consent, don't consent, Emma," cried the Captain almost frantically, laying his hand on her arm ; but she shrank from him.

"Leave her alone, sir," said Sanders savagely.

"All I must stipulate for," continued Lord Selden, "is that there should be no compulsion used."

"My niece is not afraid of me," replied Sanders, softening his tone ; "she will never meet with anything but kindness and affection from me."

Then Emma rose to accompany her uncle, and Lord Selden showed the two into an adjoining apartment. Emma threw herself on a chair, sobbing, unable to utter a word.

"Don't excite yourself, my dear child," said her uncle, sitting down by her ; "I am come to help and rescue you, not to say a word of reproach to you. I know that you have been led away against your better judgment." Then, taking her two hands, which she had removed from her face, in his, he said, "Emma, do you believe that I would tell a lie ?"

"I do not believe you would."

"As I have a soul to be saved, I would not tell a deliberate falsehood, not even to prevent you taking that fellow for a husband, and there is little that I am not ready to do for such an object ; neither would I, as I hope for forgiveness hereafter, malign a fellow-creature, were he my worst enemy." Then Sanders told his niece what we already know : how he had detected the Captain cheating at cards, and how the threat of exposure had driven him from Palermo. At the mention of cheating at cards, Emma shuddered, but remained silent. "Now, my dear Emma," continued the uncle, "whether or no you think that what I tell you is decisive against this man's character, it must at least serve to stagger your opinion of him. You may think that I was possibly mistaken, and that, having no means of justifying himself, the Captain may have thought that the better

part of valour was discretion, and accordingly took to his heels to avoid an unpleasant affair. Yet I think no man of honour or spirit would have acted thus, and you are not the girl I take you for, if such a man would find favour with you. And he behaved precisely in the same sneaking fashion the other day ; no sooner did he catch a sight of me than he bolted out of the house and disappeared. I told your mother he would not face me at dinner ; no more he dared ; then came the letter about the telegram, but, take my word for it, he never had a telegram and never went into Yorkshire, but hung about town, to carry out his wicked designs on you."

"Then Mama knows all?"

"Yes, I told her, and your brother Algernon, too."

"And Algernon believed it?"

"Yes, he believed it. I think, just at first, he did not wish to believe it, but when that note came off at once with the excuse, he reckoned that to be conclusive."

"Why was not I told?" said Emma, withdrawing her hands from those of her uncle.

"I am sure I cannot say. For some reason or other, which I could not well understand, your mother wished to put off mentioning it to you or to Gertrude, and your father was not to hear a word of it. Had I known or suspected the state of things, I should have taken upon myself to inform you."

"I will go back with you, uncle," said Emma, rising ; "I will go back at once ; please fetch my bonnet and parasol and a little straw basket I had in my hand, out of the breakfast-room. I do not want to see any one, and not *him* on any account. Don't let him come here ; I don't like being left for a minute ;" and the poor girl looked first to the door and then to the window with a terrified expression.

"*He* won't come ; trust me for that." Then Sanders'

closed the window, and fastened it. "You can turn the key of the door while I am away, if you like ; I shall be back in a few minutes, but I must have a word or two with Lord Selden."

Sanders returned to the breakfast-room, where an eager discussion seemed to be going on between Lord Selden and Baines. "My niece wishes to return to her parents," said Sanders.

"She does not, she cannot, wish it," exclaimed Baines. "I am grossly slandered ; I insist on seeing her ; she has promised to be my wife, and, if she desires to withdraw that promise, I must hear it from her own lips."

"You cannot see her ; she refuses to see you ; she told me so ; if Lady Selden will be so good as to accompany me to the other room, she can vouch for this, and that my niece is willing and desirous to go home. And now, Lord Selden, I should much prefer to have to say nothing further about that chap ; but, as he says that I slander him, I will just tell you before his face that he lies. I saw him with these two eyes of mine, and they are pretty good ones, cheat at the card-table at Palermo ; and the fellow left that place because I threatened to expose him if he did not make himself scarce."

"It is false," cried Baines. "The man lost money to me at cards, and this was his revenge."

"Just ask my friends, if ever I take a pack of cards in my hands," said Sanders, laughing, and collecting Emma's things. "Now, Lady Selden, would you kindly step this way ?"

Kate rose and went with him ; she was not all discomposed, and behaved well under the circumstances. "I am very sorry, Miss Wyndham," she said, "that you should have spent so uncomfortable a morning with us, and that anything to annoy you should have occurred. I hope you exonerate us from any evil intent."

Emma was unable to say much. How could she be expected to say much in such a false position? but she thanked Lady Selden for her kind intentions, and begged her to thank Lord Selden also. Then she took off the ring which had been the pledge between her and Baines, and handed it, with a significant look, to the lady.

"I understand," said Kate, slipping it on her own finger with a certain air of satisfaction. "About your box, Miss Wyndham—a basket it is, I think—and the maid? what had I better do? They are on board already. Can you give me your address?"

"Better not to send off the box to us," said Sanders. "If you will kindly have it directed to Mrs. Wyndham, to be kept till called for, and send it on shore to the Ship Hotel, my sister will see after it. The maid we certainly don't want to have back."

"I think," replied Kate, "we had better take her off to Norway; this will prevent stories getting about; maids cannot help gossiping. She seems a lively sort of girl, and my own maid is very helpless and down-hearted at sea; so I dare say I shall find her of use."

"That will be quite a charity to us," said Sanders.

Kate now shook hands with him. "You will excuse Augustus's roughness, will you not, Mr. Sanders? he was taken by surprise."

"To be sure, I will excuse it, as well as being called a lunatic by some one else."

Lady Selden laughed. "Visitors in their right minds, you see, do not often bolt in at the window."

"I was afraid your servants would deny me; that is my excuse."

Then Lady Selden kissed Emma, as if all had been as pleasant and comfortable as possible, and showed them a way out by which they could avoid passing in sight of the drawing-room window; after which she went back to the two gentlemen.

"But how the devil is one to prove a negative?" the Captain was saying as she entered. "Suppose, Selden, a gentleman were to say that, walking down Piccadilly after you, he had seen you pick a pocket in the crowd, how would you prove that he had not seen you do so? I say *prove*; of course I do not mean that any one would believe such an assertion."

"If he really was a gentleman," said Selden, "I should call him out; and, if he was a snob, I should horsewhip him. I think I should horsewhip the fellow, anyhow."

"That is easy to say, but how was I to horsewhip that big man before you all, and without a horsewhip at hand?"

"Then I must have done something more than you did, Baines. I must have given him a box on the ear, or pulled his nose; that's the way to give the lie to slander of that sort."

"I cannot do such things in the presence of ladies," replied Baines.

"Kate would have excused you, I am sure," said her husband. "I dare say she would even have admired your spirit."

"Whoever really knows me will disbelieve every charge that could touch my honour," said Captain Baines, with an assumption of dignity.

"It seems that your lady-love is not so incredulous, for she has left you in the lurch. Had you pulled her uncle's nose, perhaps you might have carried her off in triumph." Then Lord Selden went into the verandah to smoke his cigar.

"I am left in the lurch by all, it seems," said Baines. "I'll be hanged if Augustus himself does not half suspect me of being a swindler."

"O, no! it is his way; he is annoyed, and the whole thing has made a disagreeable impression; it will wear off."

"Such impressions are very unpleasant when they regard oneself," replied Baines angrily. "I would rather avoid his company until the wearing-off process has been accomplished. At any rate, I will not be his guest in the meantime ; so will you, please, Lady Selden, have my portmanteau and carpet-bag sent to me on shore. I am going—Good-bye."

Baines walked to the door as he said these last words. Lady Selden followed him. "Frederick," she said, "if Augustus thinks any evil of you,—I do not believe he does—but, supposing this were so, *I* do not ; and I will say more ; did I believe any evil of you, still I could not cease to love you. Love and friendship are little worth if they cannot stand a few shocks. Let me hear from you ; you shall hear from me. Meanwhile, trust me, all will come straight, and, rely upon it, in me you have a friend, proof against everything. Do you see that ? and she pointed to the ring with its motto of *Fidélité*.

"Keep it," said Baines. "There is no woman, after all, like you, Kate."

Kate Selden was mistaken in her hopes that things would come straight, or that Lord Selden's impressions would wear off. Her husband, it is true, had never suspected Baines of being a cheat ; but, now that he heard him accused, and saw him, as he thought, rather quail under the charge than repel it with proper spirit, he considered it to be just possible that he was guilty. Lord Selden was by no means straight-laced or nice in matters of morality, but he did not like a man for his intimate concerning whom such things could be even said with impunity. Now, when his wife afterward found that all her arts and persuasion failed to bring him round to her view, and that she had no chance of ever having her *cavaliere servente* restored to her, things were not so comfortable as heretofore between Kate Selden and her husband.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE RETURN.

ALL poor Emma's pride and haughtiness seemed to have melted away. Shame and fear occupied their place, and, as she hurried along with her uncle, she clung close to him, and almost pulled him along at a faster pace than the sufficiently rapid one at which he was walking.

"You will be out of breath," he said. "The more haste the worse speed, sometimes."

"Tell me," said Emma, "did Mama know it when you left?"

"She knew nothing; nobody knew anything, except Gertrude and Roper."

"Poor Gertrude!" exclaimed Emma, unable to frame the question on her lips.

Her uncle understood. "She was better and calmer when I left her, and when I had comforted her by promising I would bring you back; and you see I am bringing you back. I thought I should bring the butterfly back. Come, cheer up a bit! You have done a foolish, wrong thing, my poor child; and now you are going to make amends as well as you can; what more can any of us poor creatures do?"

"But Papa and Mama—how can I look them in the face? Mama will perhaps forgive me, but Papa—never!"

"Tut, tut," said her uncle, "who's to forgive if a father don't forgive? He's not a father if he don't forgive; and I shall tell him so. He'll be a little queer at first, I dare say; you must expect him to be queer, and you must bear that. I don't think your mother will be even queer. She is too doatingly fond of you. Roper was not to tell her anything so long as she could keep her in the dark; so she

will be put out of her misery very soon, I expect ; and I am in great hopes the servants may know nothing of your absence at all. I have purloined your father's latch-key ; so we will slip in unobserved."

Emma looked up at him gratefully, but her heart was too full to say anything. This, then, was the man she had so scorned and contemned ; of whom she had even presumed to be ashamed—he so good and worthy, she so foolish, so frail, so perverse. He was not ashamed of her now that she had disgraced herself, but had come to seek her, to save her, to rescue her from degradation, and to shield her even from the merited reproach she had incurred. Emma had received a lesson, and it was not lost upon her.

It was not yet ten o'clock when the uncle and niece reached Berkeley Square. "Remember, Emma," he said, "should any of the servants see you by chance as you come in, don't look at all flustered, but behave just as if we had walked out quietly and come in again together, and go straight up to Gertrude's room."

Emma promised she would command herself ; she had indeed every interest to do so. None of the household, however, observed their entrance. On the landing-place of the bed-room floor they met Roper near Mrs. Wyndham's door. When she saw her young lady she clasped her hands, and murmured, "Thank God !" Then Sanders opened Gertrude's door. "All right," he said softly ; "here she is ; keep very quiet ; I am going to tell Mama."

He left the two sisters in each other's arms, and then spoke a word to Roper outside.

"Yes, sir, she knows it ; I couldn't keep it any longer from her, though she had not left her room, for, as I had to pretend downstairs that Miss Gertrude was very ill, Mr. Bowles thought she ought to be told, and the doctor sent for ; and so he has been sent for now. My lady went into 'sterics first, but she's got calmer ; for I assured her

you hoped to overtake them." Then Roper knocked softly.

"Just say I am here, and all safe and right; prevent her screaming, if you can."

"She won't scream, for fear of waking Mr. Wyndham. He'd a bad night, and is dozing on." Then Roper did as directed, and Sanders followed close on her steps.

Poor Mrs. Wyndham! The joyful relief had come so rapidly on the crushing blow she had received, that she could scarcely utter an intelligible sentence at first. Sanders sat down by her, and allowed her time to collect herself. "And where is she? where is she?" said his sister.

"She would have come at once to beg your forgiveness, poor thing; but I said No, you had both of you better be calmer first; so I popped her in, to cry a bit with her sister, and let you have your cry out with me."

"John, you have been our good angel! What can I say?"

"Only that you forgive the poor erring sheep. Let me tell her that."

"Forgive her! God knows if I am not willing to forgive her! She is my own child, and she has come back to my arms."

"God bless you, Beatrice; I knew you would say that. And now, you see, not a soul in the house knows anything but Roper, and she's sure to be *mum*; the affair can be hushed up, and never get abroad, I hope. The Seldens have gone to Norway, and carried off that precious baggage, Rachel. Something may ooze out, of course; but we shan't be brought to shame, and may make believe we don't even know of the reports, if reports there should be."

Perhaps we may be able to keep it from *him*," said Mrs. Wyndham, signing with her head towards the bedroom where the unconscious father was still lying asleep.

"No, Beatrice; he ought to know, even supposing we

were certain he would never otherwise discover it ; and of that we can be far from certain."

"I dread telling him," replied his sister. "He will be very hard at first, I know."

"I will tell him," said Sanders ; "he will hear reason more coolly from me. He will think you are a fond mother who excuses everything from blind affection ; so your entreaties would only anger him at present. I can manage matters, I am pretty sure. I will get him to see her at once ; he will be as ungracious as possible in his forgiveness, I have no doubt ; but, if we can gain that point, we shall have gained all ; the rest will come in time. Let him doze on some minutes longer ; and then I will go for Emma." Sanders, in a few words, now related his morning's work, dwelling much on the fact that his poor niece was right glad, he was sure, to get away from her deceiver, who had told all manner of lies, he well knew, to entrap her. "We shall know all particulars after a bit, but she must not be questioned just yet." After saying which, he returned to the sisters.

"Your mother is longing to set eyes on you, Emma," he said ; but he had scarcely entered the room before the two girls had rushed to him. Gertrude threw her arms fondly round his neck, and Emma cast herself at his feet, bathed in tears, embracing his knees.

"What have I done to deserve this from you ?" she exclaimed, sobbing. "I have done everything to make me undeserving of your love."

"What nonsense about deserving, my dear girl !" said the good uncle, stooping to raise her, his own honest eyes now full of tears also. "Are you not my own flesh and blood, my sister's child ? That's enough to deserve love from me ; and I must be worse than a Turk or an infidel if I didn't love you." He had unwound Gertrude's arms from his neck, scarcely bestowing any attention on her ; it was the

returning prodigal, the one who had been lost and was found again, that had all the overflowings of his tenderness, as he folded her to his heart in one long affectionate embrace, such as he had never bestowed even on her blameless sister. But Gertrude was not jealous. It was all joy to her.

Then Sanders took Emma to her mother and, leaving them together, went to acquit himself of the unpleasant task of letting the father know what had happened, and engaging him to pardon the offender. It was a *very* unpleasant task. Percy Wyndham had no previous knowledge or suspicion to lead him to apprehend the possibility of such an event as had now to be broken to him, and, cautiously as Sanders went to work, and careful as he was to exonerate his sister, so far as he could, from blame or imprudence, the first outbreak of Wyndham's wrath was directed against her. This worthless fellow had been repeatedly invited, and had been made much of and petted by his wife, who ought to have known better, while he had been kept in the dark—he, the father, who ought to be master in his own house; and a great deal more to the same effect. Sanders gave him his head, and seldom interrupted him. You have a great advantage over a person who is in bed, and who cannot make his escape from you when your turn to speak comes; so Sanders could afford to wait patiently for his turn. The worst of it was, that whatever served to excuse his sister on the plea of ignorance of what had been going on threw the greater blame on Emma; Sanders had, therefore, a hard card to play. “You see,” he said, “this fellow confidently asserted that he had a rich uncle, who had promised to make him his heir, and, when he proposed for the poor child, he persuaded her that he was only deferring speaking to you until his uncle was convalescent and he could acquaint him with his intentions. Then he made believe that the uncle had disinherited him, and threw himself on her generosity.”

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Percy.

"Well, of course it was worse than stuff and nonsense," replied Sanders,— "it was all a pack of lies; but young women, when they have got a fancy in their heads, are foolish, you know, and will believe a great deal."

"They *are* foolish, you may say that; and older women are just as bad."

"She was foolish, of course, and did very wrong; she knows she did, and does not say a word to defend herself, which is a better sign of penitence than a thousand protestations."

"She may well be penitent after doing all she could to break our hearts. What has she had to complain of? Was ever a daughter treated more kindly? She is an ungrateful ——"

"Stop, Wyndham, don't call your child hard names; she is your child, after all, and you *must* forgive her."

"I can't forgive her."

"Then all I can say is, that you will not get forgiveness yourself, and you will go to hell; that is the long and the short of it. Did you never do a wrong thing yourself, Wyndham? and, if you never did up to this time, this piece of unforgiveness would be quite enough to send you there."

"Come, come, Sanders, I can stand a good deal from you, but I will not be preached to like that, and told I am on the road to perdition because I feel as any father would feel who has just heard what I have heard. I am not going to turn my daughter out of doors, but that is all the mercy she has any right to expect from me."

"She does not stand on rights; the poor thing only begs to be forgiven; she begs you to see and forgive her."

"I cannot see her," replied Percy doggedly, turning himself round to the other side in his bed. "She has disgraced me."

"Now, Wyndham, listen to me. By refusing to see

her, and betraying, as you will do, to your servants by your behaviour to her, that she has done something which you deem disgraceful, you will yourself bring this disgrace on your own head and hers. At present, no one knows anything but Roper, who is safe. Let things go on as usual, and no suspicion will arise." Wyndham made no reply. "I hear the doctor's knock; he has just arrived," continued Sanders. "He has come to see poor Gertrude; you will make her quite ill if you will not see Emma; I shall go and fetch her." Still Wyndham was silent. So Sanders went for his niece. He found her alone in her mother's dressing-room, Mrs. Wyndham having gone down to speak to the doctor. "Emma," he said, "you must not expect your father to say much; perhaps he will say nothing at all. Do you only say that you are come to beg his forgiveness; he will forgive you, if not this minute, yet after a bit, but I don't think he will say anything harsh to you; and, when you are begging his pardon, beg pardon much more earnestly in your heart, my dear child, of One whom it must grieve you far more to have offended. Say inwardly, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee.' Your Heavenly Father will forgive you on the spot, though your earthly father may take a little time about it; so do not sorrow or chafe about that, and bear a cold face for a short time, thinking of the joy in Heaven, and the best robe and the ring and the fatted calf. Now, come along."

Emma suffered herself to be led like a lamb into the bedroom. Her father was still in the position in which Sanders had left him, rolled round in the bed-clothes, with averted face. Emma knelt down on the other side. "Papa," she said in a faltering voice—no answer—then "Father" in a more plaintive tone. The father still was silent, and then the poor girl said out loud what her uncle had suggested to her to say in her heart: "Father, I have

sinned against Heaven and before thee ;” after which her face sank on the bed with a sob of anguish.

“Say no more about it, Emma,” said her father ; “it will make me ill. You had better go to your mother.”

“He called you by your name ; it’s all right ; you are forgiven,” said the uncle cheerily, after he had led the weeping girl back to the dressing-room, hardly knowing whether her father had meant or no to bestow his pardon.

Whatever he may have meant, Percy Wyndham certainly never said another syllable to his daughter on the subject of that morning’s misadventure. Perhaps she was as much indebted to his love of ease and dislike of worry for her prompt forgiveness as to any softness of heart he might possess. Yet, to do him justice, Wyndham was not a hard man, and was disposed to kindness and good-nature in his family circle and towards all who came into proximate connection with him. So Emma’s offence was condoned or ignored, and she had her kiss along with the rest from her father when his family started for Gorsham. With Sanders, who set off for Warwickshire that day, Wyndham parted most cordially, notwithstanding his unpolite plain speaking when he had paid him that visit in bed a few hours previously.

No suspicion had been aroused in the house. Emma’s absence had entirely escaped notice ; she made her appearance with her mother at breakfast towards eleven o’clock, and, if she looked less bright than usual, this appeared to be only the natural result of her uneasiness respecting her sister, in attendance upon whom she was supposed to have been up to the time of the doctor’s arrival. Then Roper went down and said that Dr. Hawes was of opinion that Miss Gertrude would be better up, and that change of air would do her good. Two things only had struck the household as strange : the one was that Mr. Sanders had gone to Mass in the morning without shaving ; the other, that

Rachel Somers had disappeared before breakfast and had never wished any one Good-bye ; but Roper disposed of both mysteries in an easy way. " Law ! Mr. Sanders don't care about his appearance. I suppose he was a bit late, and would rather go unshaved and unwashed, or what you please, than miss any scrap of his devotions." As for Rachel, Mrs. Roper said she knew the girl intended to go very early. " And, besides," she added, " I had a sort of tiff with her late last night ; so that put her out, I'll engage, and sent her off to get her breakfast with her sister, who is welcome to her as far as I'm concerned"—an account of the matter which was, it must be confessed, to use a mild term, *improvised*.

As respected the general public, very little transpired. A paragraph appeared in one of the London newspapers which, though it gave no names and spoke enigmatically, yet to all who were acquainted with the transaction plainly referred to the attempted elopement. Fortunately Mr. Wyndham never saw it. His wife did see it at Gorsham, for the newspaper which contained it was the one taken by Lady Ellerton, who read the passage out loud in a croaking voice, making sundry speculations as to who the parties could be. Of course Mrs. Wyndham had not the least idea ; her daughters were, fortunately, neither of them in the room at the time, and she took care to keep the newspaper out of their reach until it was taken away by the servants—no very difficult task, as the taste for newspapers is not often very strong in young ladies ; and Mrs. Wyndham's young ladies in particular had not until lately considered themselves as free to peruse them, so had never acquired the habit ; the liberty now tacitly accorded to them was therefore little valued and seldom used. The newspapers were for Papa and Mama, and they heard quite as much of their contents in the way of extract as they cared very much to hear ; sometimes rather more.

The dreaded visit to Gorsham was to poor Emma a season of rest and refreshment. Gertrude's affection had never been so sweet to her as in this her day of trouble. She was one who could never ruffle, or offend, or wound the sorest spirit, and had an instinctive tact on such occasions which love combined with a child-like humility can alone impart. So genuine, indeed, was that humility that I believe she took three parts of the blame of Emma's fault to herself. As for Mrs. Wyndham, she had not a word of reproach for her daughter; and, indeed, she had so much love to spare for Emma, that her misdemeanour had made no appreciable impression on the stock. Besides, Mrs. Wyndham, on the one hand, was wanting in that keen sensitiveness which belongs to delicate natures, and, on the other hand, was, from her love for her children, most curious to know the least incidents which in any way affected them. Accordingly, when she had recovered the first shock, she became very inquisitive to learn all details about an affair to which other mothers might have felt it painful to allude; and no sooner did she think that Emma was able to bear the matter being talked over than she had fifty questions to ask with intensest interest, deriving even a species of pleasure from having the whole story narrated to her; a pleasure which would be quite unintelligible to many minds.

Emma had lost nothing of her mother's good graces, it was plain; conscious that it was so, and having satisfied to the full extent all reasonable curiosity, she one day ventured to beg that no further reference might be made to the subject. "I do not wish," she said, "to forget my fault—that I shall ever bear in mind; but I wish to forget *him*, and obliterate the remembrance of him from my mind, as of a painful and distressing dream."

Her mother kissed her, and promised to distress her no further by any allusion to the past, adding, "As respects

your fault, dearest, I consider you were more sinned against than sinning,"—an indulgent verdict which Emma's conscience would hardly allow her to endorse.

The mysterious paragraph with reference to an "incident in high life" which I have just mentioned, attracted the less attention on account of the immediate dissolution of Parliament with all its attendant stirring interests, which threw all fashionable gossip into the shade. The subject of the coming elections took complete possession of men's and women's minds, and of no one's mind more fully than that of Mr. Wyndham, who, as soon as Parliament was dissolved, after running down to see his family at the seaside, whither they had then removed, and to talk over domestic arrangements with his wife, took his road to Whittlebury.



CHAPTER XLIII.

THE LOST ONE FOUND.

THE business which had detained Madame d'Héricourt in London, to which allusion has been made more than once, was not concluded as soon as she expected. Another fortnight, to the disappointment of both mother and daughter, had to be spent in London. At this juncture, an eminent priest, noted for his skill in spiritual direction, was about to give a retreat to ladies, and a rich Catholic had offered the use of her large house in Belgravia, to receive as many as it could suitably accommodate, so as to enable them to follow the exercises with the advantages of entire seclusion from the world, and of a species of temporary religious rule presiding over the arrangements of the day. Madame d'Héricourt thought that this would be a good opportunity, not to

be neglected, for her daughter Anne to ascertain the state of life to which God called her. She was to have made a retreat with this view in Paris, but the prolongation of their stay in England rendered it desirable that further delay should be avoided. Madame d'Héricourt was also very glad that Anne should be entirely separated from her while thus engaged—she would make her own retreat after her return to France. Anne accordingly was admitted among the boarders in Lady Mary Godwin's house; and her mother was not so much as to see her for the ten days during which she was to be its inmate.

Madame d'Héricourt remained, therefore, with Pauline and the cats, praying much for divine light to guide her daughter, and enlivened occasionally by a visit from Eustace Rochfort. One day, when they were, as usual, alone together, Eustace said, "I wish so much you could come and see a very interesting patient in the hospital. She has been suffering from a complicated attack of inflammation of the lungs and brain-fever, and her life until these last two days has been despaired of, her recovery being even now more than doubtful. She was discovered some days ago, late one evening, in a state of insensibility in the Park, lying on the ground. It was a very rainy evening, which perhaps you may recollect, rather more than ten days ago. One of the park-keepers found her; she was near a bench, from which it was supposed she had fallen in a swoon. She was very plainly but respectably dressed, and had a sovereign, a shilling; and a few pence in her pocket; so she was not a pauper; but there was no clue whatsoever as to who she was, except that she was evidently a Catholic, from the crucifix and the scapular which she wore about her, as well as from a small missal and a book of devotions in her basket. The book of devotions was French, but the fly-leaf was wanting as well as in the missal. She was for some days quite unable to reply to any questions; fever ran high, and she

was in a delirious state. At this time I heard of her from Mr. Pierpoint, who had been exerting himself to find out, if possible, who she was. He made inquiries of the priests attached to different churches, and the only apparent trace of her he could find was at the Jesuits' house in Hill Street. The porter said that a person answering her description had called twice on the very day she was found in the Park, and inquired for one of the Fathers who happened to be out both times. She left no name, but perhaps the Father might recognize the description ; he was, however, now on the continent.

"So I went to see her," continued Eustace, "and was much struck by her appearance, which had something in it not of this earth. She was still light-headed, and took little notice of surrounding objects. When her eyes were open, which are of a deep blue, they were usually turned upwards, almost as if gazing at something visible to them. When she rambled in mind, she spoke only of divine things; sometimes she would utter ejaculatory prayers and aspirations of love to the Sacred Heart ; sometimes she would go on talking incoherently, apparently addressing either her guardian angel or our Lady. For the last day or two she has seemed more alive to things around her, but is as yet unable to give any account of herself ; and the doctor does not wish her to be questioned much while the brain is in so weak a state. A couple of days ago—she always seems pleased to see me—I asked her what her name was. She said she could not remember, only she knew it was transposed, adding, 'Do you think that wrong?' She told me also she was a servant, but could not recollect what her mistress's name was. On a previous day she had said she wished to see a priest. I told her the priest had been to see her several times, but she had been too ill to speak to him ; I also told her she had been anointed. When I said this she looked upwards with an angelic smile, and said,

‘The prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him. My sins, I hope, are forgiven, but the Lord will not raise me from this bed.’”

“Do you think she is dying?” asked Madame d’Héricourt, who was deeply interested by Eustace’s account.

“Not exactly dying; still I doubt whether she has strength to rally; but I have not quite finished my story. I was there to-day, and found her more fit for conversation; she told me she had remembered her mistress’s name, and that it was Wyndham. Did she, I asked, live in Berkeley Square? ‘Yes,’ she replied, ‘it was a very little way from the church,’ and added, ‘It is a long time now since I have been there.’ I believe she meant since she had been at the church. This Mrs. Wyndham is, of course, your friend; strange, is it not?”

“The Wyndhams have left London,” replied Madame d’Héricourt, “but we shall now find out everything. I have a sort of recollection that I heard the girls speak of their cook as being a very devout person. It must be her; but how odd that she should have been found in so desolate a state! I will write to Mrs. Wyndham, I have her address; but I should like to go to the hospital first, and see this poor woman; indeed, I am quite anxious any way to see her.”

“It is too late to-day,” said Eustace; “I will call for you to-morrow morning. This delay will also give the patient a little more time to regain some strength.”

He came on the morrow at the appointed hour, and they went together to the hospital. At the door they met Mr. Pierpoint coming out. He told them that the sick woman was now perfectly collected, and had made her confession; the priest having been gone about an hour. Then the two were shown into the ward in which the patient lay. Eustace was preceding Madame d’Héricourt,

and, as they approached the bed, he turned back towards his companion and whispered, pointing to the pallet, "See, she is in the state of recollection I described to you."

Tyrell was sitting up in her bed, partially propped by, but not reclining on, the pillows behind her. An ebony crucifix hung round her neck ; her hands were clasped and resting on the bed ; her eyes raised, as if fixed on some object above. A smile was on her face, which was of a transparent whiteness, and her appearance was altogether of such a saintly character that it might well have impressed any beholder ; but Eustace was not prepared for the effect produced on Madame d'Héricourt. She placed her hand on his arm, as if to support herself, and he felt it tremble. He looked round, but Madame d'Héricourt had let drop over her face a thick veil which she wore, and which nearly concealed her features. "Speak to her," she whispered ; and Eustace, comprehending what he was expected to do, stepped forward. He touched the patient's hand, and then she lowered her eyes and looked at him.

"I'm much better to-day," she said, "and can understand and reply to everything which is said. Father —— came, and I am so happy ! To-morrow I shall be still happier."

"He will give you communion ?" Tyrell smiled, and what a smile it was ! "A lady has come to see you," added Eustace. "She is a good Catholic, and wishes to ascertain if she could serve you in any way. She knows Mrs. Wyndham, and will write to her."

"It is very kind of her," said Tyrell, "but I do not wish any one to write about me. I have no claim on Mrs. Wyndham. Should I ever rise from this bed, and be able to work again, then I should like to have her testimonial to my character, that I may be received into the House of Mercy ; but that will not be. I am going—I am going gently—but it is over."

Eustace moved a chair to the bedside for Madame d'Héri-

court, who had come nearer, but she drew it further back, so as to seat herself almost behind the sick woman. "You have no relations?" she asked, after a short pause, and in a very low voice.

"None," replied Tyrell, "but that is well; there will be no one to weep for me."

"Are you sure you have none? Had you ever a brother or a sister?"

"One sister—yes, but God has taken her long ago. Her spirit is with Him, though her body never rested in a quiet grave; and no holy water was ever sprinkled over it. Other waters, the waters of the great deep, rolled over her; but when the archangel's trumpet shall sound, the sea shall give up its dead."

"She was drowned? Where?"

"On her way back from the West Indies."

"Her name was Sablon, was it not?" asked Madame d'Héricourt, dropping her voice almost into a whisper.

Tyrell made a slight start. "My God!" she exclaimed, "what years since I have heard that name!"

"And perhaps she is not dead," continued Madame d'Héricourt; "but I fear to agitate you."

"No, you will not agitate me," replied Tyrell. "If she is dead, I bless God, whose Face I believe she beholds in glory; and if she be not indeed dead, then I bless Him that she has lived to add some more jewels to her crown."

"She lives, I am certain," said Madame d'Héricourt; "I know her well."

"Come where I can see you," replied Tyrell, very calmly "it is Pauline's voice; I believe you are yourself my sister."

"My own lost Anne!" exclaimed Madame d'Héricourt, as she threw her arms round her. She dreaded almost to speak or to give way to the swelling joy of her heart; but the unutterable calm of Anne Tyrell, whom we will now

call by her real name, reassured her. To Madame d'Héricourt the meeting was, in fact, more overwhelming and exciting than it was to Anne; not from want of love or of tenderness, but because, severed from all earthly ties, she believed herself to be hovering ready for departure on the borders of the grave. It was joy, it is true, to press her loved sister once more to her heart in this world, but she had been going, as she hoped, to be united inseparably to her before the throne of God. Now there was to be a fresh parting. But to Pauline the mysterious loss of her sister had been the one sad thought of years. She had encountered her share of sorrows; she had parted with a beloved husband—that, it is true, had been the severest blow she had experienced in all her life—but she had witnessed his happy Christian end, the departure, at once humble and triumphant, of his spirit purified by suffering; and he had been laid in his peaceful grave with the rites and benedictions of Holy Church; but the loss of her sister Anne, though not personally so great a bereavement to her, had a peculiar bitterness about it, owing to the cloud and the mystery which enveloped it. What had become of her? Was she dead? and, if so, when and where did she die? Was she to pray for her as one amongst the living or the dead? She had never put on mourning for her, but neither had the days of mourning ever ended. Thus the memory of her lost sister had ever hung like a shadow over her soul, even in the days of her happiness, and in the days of her sorrow had helped to deepen it. And now the veil was raised, and the lost one found! It was almost more than she seemed able to bear.

“To find you at last,” she murmured; “and to find you here in such an abandoned condition!”

“You have found me,” replied her sister, “where I wished to be. I have often prayed that I might die in the common hospital, and God has granted my desire.”

“He has accepted your will to die amongst Christ’s poor. But now, dearest Anne, whether it be to live or to die, you must come to me ; that is, when you can be moved.” Anne would have made some remonstrance and begged to be left where she was, but her sister almost stopped her mouth by urging that such a resolution would be both unreasonable and unkind. “Besides,” she added, “think how many more spiritual advantages you will enjoy under my roof. These are not to be refused when they may be had.”

And Anne did not refuse ; she was in the hands of Providence always, and He who had willed that they should meet once more, willed perhaps that she should do as her sister desired. If, therefore, it should be judged that she was fit to be moved, she agreed that so it should be. The doctor considered that in a couple of days this might be effected without danger, and the patient was accordingly transferred to Madame d’Héricourt’s house in Upper Grosvenor Street. She had now surmounted the first danger, that which attended the acute form of the illness under which she had suffered, but she was sinking surely, though almost painlessly, from the effects. Her frame, already fragile and wasted, had not possessed the vitality required for restoration ; the sentence of death was clearly on her, and her days were numbered. Those days, however, were peaceful, and they were precious, and on some there was even that temporary revival which we often witness in persons who are really in a rapid decline. There was much to tell on each side. One day, when Madame d’Héricourt was seated by the bed-side of her sister, who had never regained sufficient strength to leave it, she asked her why she did not enter religion in the convent to which she had succeeded in tracing her, and the Superioress of which had not concealed the fact, that she was under a promise of secrecy concerning her destination.

“I will tell you frankly,” replied Anne Rytell. “I did

not enter religion because I did not believe that I had a vocation to religion. I was treated with the greatest kindness by the Superioress, and, although I was penniless, I believe she would have admitted me even as a choir nun ; at any rate it was open to me to remain as a lay-sister."

"I should have thought that that would have satisfied all your highest as well as humblest aspirations."

"It might, doubtless, have satisfied my desires, and would have been far more conformable to my inclinations than the life I chose, that of domestic service. I considered, however, that Providence had left me perfectly free to embrace this life, by taking away from me every relative and friend ; there was no one whom I could grieve or upon whom I could inflict mortification by such a course. I had only myself to consider. Remember, I never doubted but that you perished in that shipwreck ; and your change of name has always prevented me from discovering my mistake. The name of Héricourt was quite strange to me, so that, although I frequently heard you mentioned at Mrs. Wyndham's, it awakened no suspicion in my mind."

"Emile," said her sister, "inherited the marquisate from a distant cousin, who had very recently lost his son. We had never expected that the property would come to us."

"Well, finding myself alone and friendless, with only two alternatives before me, religion or a life of toil to earn my bread, and after making it the subject of prayer, and of spiritual advice, I chose the latter ; and in particular I chose service. A special vocation to that state,—I mean such a one as renders it a matter of voluntary election,—may be rare, but there is such a vocation, and it has existed in all ages of the Church. I believed that it was to this lower state, rather than to that of religion, that I was interiorly called, and that Providence had, by making the choice almost one of necessity to me in the absence of a religious vocation, sanctioned its adoption. And I think I can see

reasons for this vocation. Pauline, God alone knows what was the pride of my heart ; it was not a vulgar pride, so did not attract notice, but it was all the subtler and more sinful. The love of what was honourable and decorous, which in me was pushed to an extreme, an extravagant regard for the esteem of those whom I valued, a fastidiousness, a shrinking from anything that was physically or mentally repugnant to me—so adverse to the spirit of a disciple of the Cross—all called for severe treatment. Add to these an inveterate habit of introversion, which made me a continual spectacle to myself, a habit fostered by the possession of certain talents which attracted to me, whether I would or not, an interest which flattered my taste when it did not feed my vanity, and you may well imagine what a work was needed to accomplish that death to self to which I felt unmistakably called."

"I should have thought," observed Madame d'Héricourt, "that in religion you would have found the highest and the most perfect school in which to learn humility, obedience, patience, and self-abnegation."

"I know well that the religious state is the highest and the most perfect," replied Anne, "but these things are relative ; for me it might not be the most perfect school, because neither the roughest nor the hardest. The spouse of Christ may have left a very exalted station to place herself on a level with others of lower condition ; she has cast away all worldly ties, all the memories of former greatness and former luxury, to become poor and abject in the House of God. I know all this. But the consecrated spouse of Christ is still an honoured person, honoured in, and even for, her very abasement. Abasement, be it ever so deep, is not degradation. It was degradation, not abasement or humiliation, which I dreaded and even abhorred. And again, she is not desolate ; she is fortified and consoled by her association with others who have had the same call,

and who, though they never flatter each other nor allow their love to exhibit itself in caresses such as those of which seculars are prodigal, yet they do love each other dearly and respect each other sincerely. You are mortified and humbled, it is true, in religion, but the mortification and the humiliation are medicinal remedies administered by the hand of love, and, hard as they may be to bear, the recollection of their object must support the courage and soften the difficulties of her who undergoes the probation. But in service it is otherwise, far otherwise. You receive mortifications and humiliations, not from the hand of love, but from the pride, the ill-temper, and not seldom from what is worse, the profound indifference and disregard of those who are your appointed superiors. Obedience and patience have often little to sweeten them, and there is a constant call upon you for a self-abnegation which is not, I will not say appreciated, but frequently not so much as noticed, by those whose caprice or selfishness impose it on you. And if these be the trials which await those who have been brought up in a humble line of life, and which even to them are often very hard to bear, what must they be to one who has been used to all the delicate regards and consideration of a higher class? Moreover, she has not the comforts and alleviations which other servants, born to their state, possess. She consorts daily with those whose society is rather an addition to her trial than a relief. She is truly alone. I am now, my dear Pauline, about to depart, and can speak of myself almost as another person. I will tell you, therefore, that none can conceive what I have endured from this trial alone. Oh, it was this which was the real galling trial to my soul, which by nature dwelt proudly in its own intellectual and imaginative conceptions, which was full of natural repugnances, and loathed association with all that was gross or common! The evil tempers and consequent dislikes of those about me, which

perhaps an almost unavoidable unsociability on my part helped to draw upon me, were a constant source of annoyance. But much more—Oh, how much more!—humiliation did I experience from the occasional likings of which I was the object. That was, indeed, a dragging of me through the mire. How hard I found it to tolerate the risings of pride, and not to run away from what I felt as the deepest degradation of all! It pleased God that I should even very recently undergo a trial of this kind. It was, I may say, the last bitter drop given to my self-love to drink; and how I rejoiced to find that the sweet lesson of humility had at length been learned, and that I could receive it with an untroubled spirit! For this I blessed and do bless my God.” Anne paused a minute, and then added, “Yet it would be untrue and ungenerous were I not to say that amongst the class with which I was called to associate as an equal, I found much to love and much to edify. How many did I meet in the constant practice of a humility, an unselfishness, and a simplicity which seemed a second nature to them, but which had cost me years of hard struggle to acquire!”

“It was more difficult to you, dearest Anne, from your very antecedents. More sacrifice was involved in these acts on your part than was possible in theirs.”

“Yes, that is true, to a certain extent. I had that to unlearn which they had never learned; but do not let us therefore diminish their merit. Service is a great trial to every man and woman in the world, and it is the occasion in not a few, as I have found, for the acquisition of many virtues: it might be a school of high sanctity to all.”

Anne was much pleased at having often her niece Pauline to come and sit with her, and was charmed with the guilelessness of this young heart. The cats were tolerated, and allowed to frisk upon the bed, and exhibited a special partiality for its occupant; all who are familiar with

animals, indeed, will have noticed the instinctive likings they will display for certain individuals. Instead of viewing these little creatures as a distraction from the topics on which she alone desired to converse, or, in fact, ever did converse, Anne took occasion, from the subject of God's creation, to draw Pauline's mind to spiritual subjects. And then she would tell her of the love of God's saints for these mute companions of our earthly life, as manifested in St. Francis of Assisi, for instance, and many others; or again, she would relate Blessed Lidwine's visit in vision to the earthly Paradise in company of her guardian angel, and describe the beautiful flowers and animals she saw there. With much more of this kind did Anne well know how to intersperse the conversation, and extract matter for edification from Pauline's natural tastes and predilections. To no portion of the day did her niece look forward with more pleasure than to the hour she was allowed to spend by her aunt's bedside.

And then the elder niece, her namesake, returned to hear the joyful news that Aunt Anne was found, Aunt Anne, in whose story she had taken so lively an interest. The retreat had been decisive as respected its chief object, the choice of a state of life. Anne's director, during its exercises, had expressed to her his strong opinion that she was not called to a religious life, but rather to the married state; at any rate that it was, he believed, God's will that she should sanctify her soul in the world. Anne d'Héricourt had many conversations with her saintly aunt, to whom she at once felt that she could manifest every thought of her heart. Soon she had poured into her ear the little history of her late partiality and half-engagement, and how she had given it up, because she believed that there was no security for solid happiness in a marriage of that kind.

"You did right," said her aunt. "You never would have been happy, in the true sense of the word, with Mr.

Algernon Wyndham. He is an amiable young man, I believe ; he has many good qualities, but his heart has gone away from God. Never accept the love of a heart which does not love its God supremely ; you will accept a worthless thing if you do."

"I have not a feeling of regret as to my determination," replied Anne ; "and, indeed, I believe that I never had anything as regarded my feelings towards him, beyond impressions, a gratified imagination, and, I suppose, gratified self-love ; but that is all a thing of the past now—as respects him, I mean. He is personally nothing to me, and never can be anything to me."

"You will probably marry, my child ; and everything will depend on a good choice. A good choice is not so easy a thing to make, I mean a very good one ; perhaps, however, no one was ever better situated than yourself for making one in every point of view excellent."

"How so ?" said Anne.

"There is a young man who has known and loved you from childhood. No man or woman, of course, is faultless, but Eustace Rochfort is as nearly free from any defect, so far as I can judge, as is well possible ; never have I known any one whose unselfishness and purity of intention have so deeply struck me. It is from your mother, not from himself, that I have learned the secret of his long attachment to you, and neither she nor Mr. Rochfort has the slightest idea that I designed to mention the subject to you. Your mother would not do so, I am sure, from the fear of appearing to desire to influence you, and the young man thinks so little of his own merits or worth, that he is likely to be unwilling to sacrifice your friendship by endeavouring to obtain what he humbly believes he has no chance of obtaining. But I thought it was well you should know this. I shall not tell my sister what I have said, and certainly I shall not tell Mr. Rochfort either ; so you will be

as free, and may feel as free, as you were before. Only, if you will take a dying woman's advice—you know that always counts for something—do not, dear Anne, lightly throw away an opportunity of making a choice so wise and good."

"Dear aunt," said Anne, much moved at this unexpected declaration, "your advice would always be valued by me more than I can say; but I am quite taken by surprise. Eustace Rochfort attached to me from my childhood! I can scarcely believe it."

"It is true, most true, nevertheless; you have been his one and only love."

Anne thought a moment. "I know," she then said, "how good he is, and lately I have accidentally heard things which have made me value him still more. I have also a warm friendship for him, and we have tastes and pursuits in common, but"—and she paused.

"But what?" asked her aunt.

"I hardly know how to express myself, lest you should misunderstand me."

"Perhaps I can guess. You mean that you esteem him and think him worthy of love, but that you do not love him?"

"Well, partly, but not exactly. I believe I could love him very much, and the knowledge that he has long loved me does touch my heart, which shows me that I am not indifferent to him; otherwise I should be sorry, not pleased. But when I come to reflect upon myself, I find, not that I have ever loved any one really better, but that I could love in a way in which I could never expect to love him. I had a feeling for that other one which I never should have for him. I can hardly explain what it was, but he satisfied my imagination in many ways. I do not mean that I would prefer him with my present knowledge; if I had to marry one of the two, I should not hesitate; nevertheless,

knowing what I could feel if Mr. Rochfort had, in addition to his worth and lovable qualities, that indescribable charm which the other possessed, it seems as if, were I to accept him, I should be giving him but half a heart. I fear I am scarcely intelligible, and, if you understand me, I fear you will blame me and think me foolish."

"I believe I understand you, my dear Anne, and I will not call you foolish, though I think you are disposed to fall into a mistake, from looking into your feelings too closely and from comparing what ought not to be compared. You are not what people call in love with Mr. Rochfort; you think you could not be so. Well, I suppose it is not common, at least not for women, to fall in love with those they have known intimately as friends for many years. And yet a most tender and beautiful affection may and often does spring up between persons who have been thus associated, an affection which, when grounded on mutual esteem, is a better security for enduring love than any mere attraction could be, and for a love the quality of which will not change. I have nothing to say against that sentiment, of a more exciting nature, of which we were just now speaking. It is often a help to the discovery of mutual affinities and sympathies, which fit persons to be companions; and, besides, whatever God has implanted in us has a good purpose and a holy end. Yet sometimes it misleads us; sometimes it is followed by bitter disappointment; at other times, when it does not disappoint, it becomes a snare by leading to a species of idolization. Its presence is no essential element in real love. I do not say you were in love with young Mr. Wyndham, but, if not, you were on the road to being so; your liking had this tendency in it. Yet, apart from his unworthiness of your love from a religious point of view, I suspect that disappointment and disenchantment might have followed on closer knowledge. Mr. Wyndham's recommendations are patent and on the surface. He has

talents, but whether there be much corresponding depth is another thing. At the best, I am convinced that he could scarcely have satisfied you as a husband ; for, if I am not much mistaken, you are mentally and by education his superior ; that is not well. Now, it is different with Mr. Rochfort. I do not scruple to say he is your superior, Anne, yet I do not undervalue you by any means."

"I am sure he is."

"More than you know, perhaps, though well disposed to believe it, because as yet you know him but imperfectly, for all you have seen him so often. You may rely upon it, Eustace Rochfort has depths both of heart and of mind which you have never suspected ; his delicate reserve and marvellous modesty keep his merits out of sight."

"He is reserved," said Anne, "and I am inclined to be so too, which, perhaps, has stood in the way of more real knowledge."

"Reserve in him, however, does not spring from want of frankness or an unconfiding nature, any more than it does in you," continued her aunt ; "it would all melt away in true intimacy, and then it is that his charm would come to light. It is something, surely," she added, smiling, "to make agreeable discoveries and to have pleasant surprises, and not to know all there is to like in a single day, only to find too late, perhaps, that the picture we have been contemplating was something like scene-painting, which loses all its beauty and all its illusion on a near inspection. A wife, if she is to be happy, ought to be able also to look up to her husband and find a help in his guidance, instead of only hoping that with the blessing of God he may be kept straight. Eustace Rochfort, so far from being a source of uneasiness and of solicitude, would be a support to you, and lead you on in the paths of holiness."

"That is most true," replied Anne. She said no more, but the conversation had made an impression on her. Nor

did it count for nothing in Eustace's favour that she had become aware of having been the object of his silent love for so long a period. If her mother had told her this but a short time since, it would, it is true, have had a very different effect upon her, as it would have led to her forming a decided determination against him ; but circumstances had since occurred which had considerably modified her feelings, and she had, besides, the satisfaction of knowing that no one was aware that she was in possession of this little secret. She was not therefore called upon for any immediate decision.

Anne Rytell was not to prolong her stay among them. Symptoms, which increased in intensity, manifested the near approach of death. She was herself aware that the time of her departure was near at hand, and she wished to take leave of all while as yet she had the full use of speech and of her mental powers. Then she would be left alone with God, and with God's minister, and with the sister who loved her only for God's sake, as she expressed it : that was the nun who had come to tend her in her sickness. She had made this pact with her sister Pauline. To be in the midst of her family, who desired this consolation, she had given up her own wish to die in the common hospital, unknown to all ; but she must reserve the privilege of dying alone. Madame d'Héricourt willingly consented. It is a usage far from strange to Catholics, embodying, as it does, in a practical form a truly Catholic object, and in Italy, where she had once made a considerable stay, it was a very common custom in the case of the dying. They bid adieu to their friends, who then withdraw, leaving them to the ministrations of the Church. So it neither shocked nor surprised Madame d'Héricourt to have this request made by her sister. They accordingly gathered round her bed to give and receive the last farewell on earth, Eustace Rochfort being also present by the dying woman's express desire.

Anne Rytell was propped up in her bed, the crucifix, which lay on her bosom, she held clasped in one of her thin hands ; her countenance, as throughout her illness, bore an expression of indescribable peace. It was as if the battle was over. This is not invariably the case during the last hours even of the very holy, but it was so in Anne's case. After addressing to them all collectively a few simple words of exhortation, or, rather, of sweet entreaty to love God only, for that He only was worthy of love, as they would all know at the last, she whispered some special counsel to each, signing to them in succession to draw closer to her.

Pauline was the first. She was weeping more than any of the rest ; it was her nature. "Dear child," said her aunt in a low voice, "do not weep for me. I am very happy, and you will be happy, too, if you will live for our good God. You have the simple tastes of childhood still, Pauline. Take care that when they go you do not replace them with the baubles and frivolities of a later age ; that will be your danger. Offer all your little recreations to God now ; say, 'All for thee, my God.' You can make that intention with your present diversions, for they are innocent ; and when you feel you cannot say this sincerely, be sure you have got a toy which you must throw away."

Then Anne drew near, and she said to her, "Strive to love God more and more, and with great simplicity. He loves the simple, and favours them above all. Beware of too much self-scrutiny ; we can examine ourselves better without that, for we shall see ourselves in the light God gives, and He gives that light to those who have their eye on Him ; and we shall act better, too. When you paint, you look more at what you are copying than at the point of your pencil. Don't look too much at your pencil's point, dear Anne, but look at that Face the beholding of which

transforms us into Its glorious likeness. God bless you and guide you."

Anne Rytell then beckoned to Eustace, who, as not being a relative, and also from his retiring modesty, had remained in the background. It was to thank him for all his kindness and charity. "My thanks are owed to *you*," he said; "and now will you add to my gratitude by giving me a word of parting advice? It will be treasured up by me through life." "Persevere," she replied, "in the course in which you are walking." Eustace was the only one to whom she had no other counsel to give.

Last of all, the sister and companion of her youth drew near. It was a trying moment to Pauline d'Héricourt, but she was too thankful to God for His late mercy to repine, and loved her sister too dearly not to control her emotion. "Pauline," said the dying one, "we are parting now, when I had hoped we had been about to meet in our true home; but our Lord is very good, and detains you here to become more perfect. I know you love God, and wish to love Him wholly, so I need not urge that upon you; but fly solicitudes, and dread scruples as the rust of our actions. Scruples do not flow from exceeding love, because love casts out fear. Sometimes they are trials, but when they come from our own selves, they come, I think, from the fear that we have not done our duty. Duty—yes, it is well for many to think of their duty to God; but a time comes when that carefulness about our duty is a clog upon us and a hindrance to pure love. You understand me. Pure love loses sight of duty, just as it forgets the law. Get liberty of spirit; cast all into the bosom of God." Such was the advice which Anne Rytell addressed to one who few would have supposed needed any. But Anne thought that in her conscientious sister this one thing perhaps was lacking to perfection, and that the very delicacy of her conscience fed a species of self-

reproach and anxiety, which, though not sinful, is an imperfection, as being a remnant of self. And Pauline did understand her.

All had now received their parting confidence, when Anne d'Héricourt said, "Dear aunt, will you not leave a message for poor Gertrude Wyndham? she values so much all you say."

"She does not need my counsel," replied her aunt; "God has sent her a friend and adviser."

"Mr. Sanders?"

"Yes; no one knows the worth of that man, he does not know it himself; it is hidden from him by his wonderful simplicity, but I believe he stands very high in God's favour—so high that many will marvel when the day comes for the revealing of all secrets. But I do not forget that family, with which I dwelt so long, and will remember them all before the throne of God, when I am admitted to His presence."

Then Madame d'Héricourt begged her sister to give them all her blessing. "I am not worthy," she said, "but, if you desire it, I will pray God to bestow His blessing on you." They all knelt down near the bed, and Anne Rytell made the sign of the cross, looking up to heaven, and murmuring a prayer. After which she gazed lovingly at them all. Anne and Eustace were next each other. The dying woman beckoned to them to come a little nearer, then she took her niece's hand and deliberately placed it in that of Eustace. She said not a word, but there was no mistaking the meaning of the act; nor did she open her lips again, but leaned back, closed her eyes, and by a slight wave of her hand signified that all was over now, and she would be left alone.

The next day, at that same hour, she was lying with the crucifix still on her bosom, and, with it, a beautiful white lily, which her sister had reverently placed there. Not a

line was visible on the fair countenance ; her hair, which had never known a touch of grey, was smoothed back on her alabaster brow, and there was almost a smile on the lips. As Pauline gazed on her she could fancy she beheld her as she was twenty years before, in the flower of her youth, only that now there was something more heavenly and more touching in her loveliness. "Truly," she said to herself, "God is pleased to beautify her singularly in death because she despised and abased herself in life for the love of Him."



CONCLUSION.

WE must now return to other scenes. Affairs had gone ill with the Wyndham family since we last parted from them. Mr. Wyndham's election was a contested one, as he expected ; he had to disburse a good deal of money at Whittlebury, and to go through a good deal of harassing work. Backed, however, by the Duke of Plumpton's interest, he pulled through, and was returned for that borough. The liberal party loudly declared that there had been bribery and corruption, and it was believed that the validity of the election would be disputed. So neither retrospects nor prospects were particularly agreeable to Percy Wyndham, as he returned to his empty house in Berkeley Square, to find the sofas and chairs swathed in linen and brown holland, and to be cooked and done for by Mrs. Jervis. To console him the following morning, as he sat at his solitary, cheerless breakfast—Wyndham, though not a talkative man, did not relish solitude, and sadly missed his family *entourage*—there was his daily paper at least. He took it up, and in about a minute or

two laid it down again rather suddenly ; then he pushed away his cup of chocolate, which remained untouched, and leaned back in his arm-chair.

Mrs. Jervis entered at this juncture with the grilled leg of a fowl which the master had ordered, and was uncomfortably struck by his appearance. He was very pallid, so she ventured to inquire whether he felt unwell ; he replied rather faintly that he was not ill, and made an effort to sit up with a show of attempting to help himself to some of the dish which she had set before him ; but this was only for the purpose of ridding himself of her presence. As soon as she was gone he resumed his former attitude, and an hour later she found him in the same position. His speech now appeared to be partially affected, at least there was a degree of thickness in his utterance which alarmed the good woman, so she consulted with her husband, and they both thought it well to send for Dr. Hawes. The doctor was soon there, pronounced the patient to be not precisely suffering under an attack of paralysis, but seriously threatened with a seizure. A telegraphic message was sent to Mrs. Wyndham, proper remedies were administered, and by the afternoon, when his terrified wife arrived, she had at any rate the consolation of finding that the danger had been staved off, and of hearing the assurance from the physician's lips that the late attack, or rather threat of attack, would, he was confident, leave no traces ; nevertheless it was a warning, and one which ought not to be disregarded. Future health would very much depend on the care and prudence adopted.

We must pause a moment here to give a glance at Percy Wyndham's pecuniary affairs. It would have been well had the person most interested therein given more than a glance long before this period. The immediate cause of his illness, which came as the climax of other predisposing causes, was the having seen in the newspaper the failure of a

house of business in which he had himself some money embarked ; not, it is true, to any very large amount, but still a considerable sum, the loss of which in the present embarrassed state of his finances would be a very serious matter to him. Percy Wyndham, it will be remembered, was a younger son. In his early youth he had been, like his son Algernon after him, somewhat wasteful and extravagant. Without being addicted to any special vice, young men of the world will often be extravagant, and get through an incredible amount of money. So Percy's father had to pay his son's debts, and grumbled, as Percy did when his own turn came ; and then the son had bethought himself of improving his circumstances by marriage, for the money seemed likely to ooze away as before. A friend had mentioned Beatrice Sanders to him, as a strikingly handsome girl, and the acknowledged heiress of thirty or forty thousand pounds. But Beatrice moved in the second set. Her uncle, the Nabob, had made his fortune, but the upper walks of society were unattainable to him. For himself he did not care, but he coveted them for his beautiful niece. If you should enter the *salon* of a rich individual of the second set you will very likely find as good music, as good lighting, and as good a supper as in the most aristocratic house ; you will see as expensive dressing, and, possibly, as many pretty girls. One who belongs to the superior circle will say that you will not observe the same air of distinction in the ladies, and that the deficiency is still more palpable in the gentlemen ; he will also tell you that if you look below the surface you will miss something and find something which tells you, in a manner difficult to put into words, that you are out of your element ; you are, in fact, among the second set. The difference may be, and, doubtless, is to a great degree, purely conventional, and argues no real inferiority often in the matter even of genuine refinement. Be this as it may, there is one thing unquestionably true—that he who moves

in the first set will not recognize a single face which he is in the habit of seeing in the circle he frequents. So Percy Wyndham did not see a face he knew in the handsome ball-room of a great printer in the purlieus of Bedford Square, for which an invitation had been procured for him, but he saw Beatrice Sanders's bright eyes, which took him captive at once. The courtship was not long. He was accepted, and the Nabob had been charmed to get a son-in-law of birth and social position, such as Mr. Wyndham possessed ; so there were no difficulties raised about settlements. A very handsome allowance was made to the young couple, and thirty thousand pounds were settled on the bride, unhampered in any way by tyings up or trusteeships ; so, when the uncle died soon after, the Wyndhams had the full control of their money, capital as well as interest. Then Percy's father died, and the son inherited his portion, as younger son, of eight thousand pounds. It must be allowed that the Wyndhams, if not rich, had a comfortable provision, and might have done extremely well but for Wyndham's ambition as regarded public life. Much was spent on elections, and circumstances had begun to look awkward, when a cousin, an old bachelor, died, and left them his town house furnished and a good sum of money besides. This unexpected windfall set them on their legs again, and unfortunately elated them a little too much ; for Percy Wyndham had already borrowed money at interest, which it would have been wise now to repay. He hoped, however, gradually to discharge the debt with less inconvenience, which virtually meant with less retrenchment. His wife, from whom he concealed nothing else, was ignorant that he had borrowed this money—he would have been glad to have concealed the unpleasant fact even from himself ; but Percy's expectations of gradually liquidating the debt had proved fallacious ; the London house and the London season had entailed much expense, and the occasional drain from

elections, which always cost something even when there is no contest, continued as before.

At the time, therefore, at which this narrative first introduced the Wyndham family to us, things were rapidly sinking back into the old state ; hence the uneasiness which Wyndham displayed from time to time. He had not, however, the courage to make a searching examination, and thoroughly to satisfy himself as to how he stood. His wife would not have lacked the decision and prudence necessary for such a step, but she was in the dark, as we have seen, in regard to the debts. When, therefore, this failure of a house of business in which he had a pecuniary interest occurred, coupled with the depreciation of the Spanish bonds and his many late expenses, Wyndham received a severe shock. When he had sufficiently recovered to give his mind to the subject, he saw that some immediate retrenchment was absolutely necessary, if he would not be a ruined man. He now told all to his wife, who behaved very well, and was the first to propose that they should part with the house in Berkeley Square along with a large part of the furniture, reserving only a portion, in order to furnish a house of smaller size, whenever they should be able to set up again.

And now came the question of the seat in Parliament. The physician had given it as his decided opinion that late hours, hot rooms, mental excitement, irregularity in meals, and, above all, late dinners, were very bad, nay, full of risk, for Mr. Wyndham. But how is a member of Parliament to avoid late hours, a heated atmosphere, mental excitement, and irregularity in the hours of eating? Common prudence pointed to a resignation of the seat, which was, moreover, almost certain to be disputed. The verdict might go against the Conservative member. Wyndham knew he was personally guiltless of bribery, but could he be sure what the Duke of Plumpton's agent might have done in his name? Undoubtedly he had been obliged to

disburse a great deal. He could not afford to recommence, if unseated ; so Beatrice modestly suggested that it might be best to resign. " Surely I had better wait till I see the result," replied Wyndham rather testily. " Perhaps nothing after all will be done."

" But, then, your health ? " suggested his wife.

" Well, if I resign, it is as good as shelving myself at once at forty-eight," rejoined the husband ; and then she said no more. Wyndham was a man who specially disliked the idea of being what he called " shelved " ; and there are very many like him in that respect. Mrs. Wyndham, however, remembered that not only would prudence as regarded health have dictated retirement from public life, but as respected circumstances it was highly desirable that attendance on Parliament should cease. Of course, now that the London house would be given up, Wyndham must have a lodging while the House was sitting. This would cost money, and it would also separate him from his family. But she refrained from insisting ; she was a woman of considerable discretion and self-control, as we have seen ; and, to do her justice, it must be added, although worldly, she was not altogether selfish—her selfishness, at least, did not centre in her own person. Far from it, she was continually sacrificing herself in a thousand ways to those about her. True, her charities had rather a restricted circle, and, it is to be feared were nourished more by natural affection than by any supernatural motive.

After a few days Mr. Wyndham was able to accompany his wife to Dover, where they remained, getting through the summer and autumn as well as they were able. It was rather weary work at times to keep up spirits, for the poor *paterfamilias* had no resources in himself, and took no lively interest in anything except public affairs and politics. From an active share in these his health threatened to separate him ; he did not like to allow this to himself, but

he knew it, and the knowledge depressed him. Emma made very creditable efforts to be cheerful, but there was nothing to make her feel very gay, either in the memories of the past or the prospects of the future. Gertrude, as the autumn drew on, got a cough, which added to the anxieties of her mother. Sanders did not leave Scotland until the middle of September, spent a day or two in Warwickshire, and in London on his way back, and reached Dover during the last week in September. He had heard, of course, of Wyndham's illness and the pecuniary difficulties, and did not expect to find the family very bright. His visit, however, was welcomed very differently to what it had been three months before in London. All were sincerely rejoiced to see him, and his coming revived the general spirits. Wyndham, who really liked his brother-in-law, and was pleased to have a fresh comer to relieve his dulness, was more himself that evening than he had been since his illness. This would not last, of course ; what does last in this world ? Meanwhile Mrs. Wyndham, who was of a sanguine elastic disposition, was greatly cheered, particularly as her brother, who, she knew, never said what he did not truly think, assured her that he did not remark much difference in her husband. Gertrude, he thought, looked and seemed quite unstrung and far from well. His sister owned to feeling uneasy at her altered appearance, and said she thought they would have to move either to the Isle of Wight or to Devonshire for the winter ; "but Percy," she added, "seems disinclined, and I do not like to alarm him." Then Sanders again proposed to take his niece to Italy with him ; and this time the anxious mother did not oppose the plan. If her father consented, Gertrude should go. It was with some little trouble that this consent was obtained, for Percy's temper since his illness had manifested a certain waywardness and irritability which made him somewhat intractable. He had never liked to be

reasoned with, but formerly he generally gave in to avoid an argument ; now he was more disposed to the opposite plan of action. John Sanders, however, succeeded in persuading him at last. "The girl coughs, you see," he said, "and winter is coming on. If she gets worse, the doctors may be recommending you to take her to some warmer place, which just now would be inconvenient to you ; you had best let me take her ; I will bring her back to you in May." So Percy at length gave a grumbling assent, and when once he had said "Yes," however reluctantly, he never drew back from his word.

Sanders deferred his departure for a couple of days, to give time to his niece to make her preparations. Gertrude was truly happy to go with him, but her heart would have been lighter could she have left her family more cheerfully situated. She felt especially parting from Emma, who, however, did not pain her by making any opposition. Emma, in fact, knew that by her late behaviour she had forfeited the right to complain of anything, and, besides, she shared her mother's uneasiness about Gertrude's cough. Sanders, during his stay, was able to communicate an interesting piece of news. He had seen Madame d'Héricourt in London, who had come over by herself for a few days, and had informed him that her daughter Anne was engaged to Mr. Rochfort.

"I always thought it would be so," said Gertrude.

"Poor Algernon !" exclaimed Mrs. Wyndham.

"I rather think poor Algernon will console himself," rejoined Sanders. Emma thought so, too, but remained silent. "Where is he now ?" asked the uncle.

"He is gone to Scotland," replied his sister, "to pay some visits, and will remain during October for the grouse-shooting."

"He will console himself," repeated Sanders.

Both uncle and niece were right in their belief. Alger-

non, however, had not returned, as Emma had once predicted, to his old flirtation with Lady Jane Follett. There was too much contrast between her and his late love to admit of the revival of his liking; at present, indeed, he was not much disposed to fall in love at all, but some one had fallen in love with him. This was a certain Mrs. Fenton, the widow of a rich banker, who had left her at his decease almost the whole of his large fortune. She was some six years Algernon's senior, but was good-looking, showy, and agreeable; not precisely what the young man would have himself picked out, but still very endurable under present circumstances. These circumstances, pecuniarily speaking, were very awkward, and assistance from his father was less than ever to be expected. As regarded heart, the ground might be said to be lying fallow. He had discarded the idea of Anne d'Héricourt, for Algernon was not a man to fret after the unattainable, but he had no mind, as I have said, for any one else. Mrs. Fenton, therefore, might be quite as good as another, so far as personal preference was concerned, and a great deal better in a prudential point of view than most. Difficulties in the way there were none, nor were there any mortifications in store; for, instead of a papa to be encountered, who would talk of settlements, here was a lady, her own mistress, who was most willing to pay his debts, and would think him cheap at that price. Thus, the *dénouement* of the affair could hardly be doubtful.

On the last evening before the departure of Sanders, he lingered on with his sister after the rest had retired—Percy now went to bed early—and when they were alone he gave her the history of her late servant, which Madame d'Héricourt had told him in confidence. As she could not make the world understand the eminent holiness of her sister, and the heroic sacrifices to which it had led her, she did not wish her to be the subject of gossip,

wonder, and vulgar observations. "God knows," she had added, "so far from feeling any personal shame on the subject, I glory in her, but I think I am best consulting her wishes by leaving her in the shade and obscurity which she sought. However, as she left a message for your family, I will make an exception in respect to you."

The reader knows what this message was. All this, as well as the singular history and holy death of her late servant, who had lived so long unknown under her roof, Sanders related to his sister, and, as he spoke, the blood mounted to her face to that painful degree which almost forces tears into the eyes. Emma had had her severe mortification. It was now the turn of Mrs. Wyndham. "Oh, John!" she exclaimed. "This is cruel! this is dreadful! What have I done?"

"You did not know it," said Sanders. "I would not have told you, Beatrice, if I had thought it would affect you so painfully."

"You were right to tell me, John; it is better, no doubt, that I should know, but—when I remember how I treated her!"

"You did not ill-treat her, I suppose. You treated her as you treated your other servants, no doubt; but, then, you thought she was one of the same class. She had placed herself in that class, and, of course, did not expect or wish to be treated differently. If an emperor chooses to travel incog. in a railway carriage, dressed like a farmer, and I get in and behave to him as I should to any other good sort of man who was my fellow-passenger, the emperor would not have any right to complain, and I don't suppose he would complain. If I was high and contemptuous, because I held this farmer cheap, and thought myself a bigger man, who had a title to be respected himself, but had no obligation to show respect to any one beneath him, then he *would* have a right to complain, not as an emperor

but as a fellow-man. We all owe each other respect, because we are equal before God and servants of the same master, but the manner of showing this respect must vary, of course, with station."

"I did *not* show her respect, John," replied his sister, sadly and emphatically. These words from the lips which uttered them were equivalent to a "*peccavi*." "I did not even show her kindness," she continued, "for I judged her rashly, and parted with her in a harsh and unfeeling way. God forgive me! Yet I did not, at least, know that she was in so destitute a condition. Of that I was ignorant. But I can understand it now; for Mary Tidman, whom I also sent away, and whose pocket was picked of all her savings in an omnibus, told Roper, before she left, that Tyrell had made the whole sum good to her. Think of the charity of that friendless woman! Ah me, what a brute I have been! I shall never recover it!"

"Beatrice," said her brother affectionately, "do not take on in this way; fretting is never any good. We are poor creatures, and do a great many wrong things; but we have a good God, who will forgive us when we are sorry. You see, many of these wrong things we do very ignorantly, and then He sends us something to open our eyes; and this is a great grace, even when it makes them smart a little. This incident has been a grace. It is an immense gain to get a little self-knowledge. When I get a piece of self-knowledge, which I often do, thank God! I assure you I quite chuckle over it. We must try and do better; that is all. As for her whom you grieve to have offended, as you think, you have no cause for sorrow. If you gave her any, it has added to her merits; and, so far from owing you a grudge, I am sure she will have thought you her best friend, and now she is in Heaven, I believe, praying for you. Come, cheer up; you can tell Percy and Emma all this strange history, and I will tell Gertrude, but say

nothing to Madame d'Héricourt unless she should choose to mention the subject to you." Then Sanders wished his sister good-night, and, as he did so, he slipped a folded piece of paper into her hand. "That," he said, "I thought might not come amiss just now, when there have been so many expenses." He was hurrying off, but Mrs. Wyndham, looking at the paper, saw that it was a cheque for £500. "John," she exclaimed, "this is too generous! I really cannot."

"Nonsense about generosity!" replied the good man, "it can't be a question of generosity between brother and sister. Bless your heart! I shan't miss that sum, or more, should you need it. Thank God, things have gone very well with me. I am almost afraid of becoming a Dives some of these days. Now keep that to yourself; it is for *you*; say nothing to Percy."

"I *must* tell Percy," replied his sister, crying.

"Not till I am gone, at any rate; and don't let him say a word to me about it, because, you see, it is not for him." Then Sanders went off to bed, and Beatrice retired to her room, a better woman, I think, than she had last come out of it.

It need scarcely be said that Gertrude spent a very happy time that winter. In Teresa she found a pleasant, cheerful companion, and a warm friendship soon sprang up between the cousins, which operated most beneficially on Gertrude. Teresa had all her sweetness, coupled with a much stronger character, a firmer will, a clearer understanding, and a more enlightened piety. Like her father, she at once saw the true and right path, and entered upon it without hesitation. She had also his simplicity of disposition, his candour, and utter want of artifice. Although she had not been highly educated, the mental training she had received was sound, and she had a love of knowledge which had led her to acquire much information from her own reading. She had

also considerable talent of varied kinds, and a love of occupation, which Gertrude's habits had never fostered in her, but which now began to develop under the influence of example and the attraction of companionship. And so the time passed away most agreeably. Gertrude rallied in health, and her spirits acquired a buoyancy which they had never before possessed.

Letters from home were cheerful on the whole. Her father's health improved during the winter, and he was looking forward to taking his seat when Parliament met in the beginning of February.

"That's bad," said John Sanders. "He had best give up all that sort of thing, if he does not want to lose all he has gained."

"I don't think Papa could live without Parliament," said Gertrude.

"That's unfortunate," replied her uncle, "for I fear he won't be able to live with it."

Sanders was a true prophet. Mr. Wyndham took his seat, and the petition of the Liberals of Whittlebury failed to unseat him, but he had a more potent foe, who was about to do their work effectually. Easter fell early that year, and Mr. Wyndham joined his family at the end of March. Letters now gave a less cheering account of his state. He was much lowered and very nervous; still hopes were expressed that the sea-air and rest would revive him, as they had before; he was not ill. But soon he *was* ill; and had another seizure of an unmistakably paralytic character. This distressing information was communicated by Mrs. Wyndham in a letter to her brother; she added that, unless the attack should be repeated, which she trusted would not be the case, she saw no reason why he should bring Gertrude back sooner than he had purposed. But she appended a postscript, separate from the letter, in which she said that the doctor could not as yet pronounce with

any certainty as to security from relapse, although he hoped that the danger was passed ; moreover, he had not disguised the fact that a second attack would certainly be more serious. Should these fears be realized, she would telegraph for them. This postscript John Sanders kept to himself, but began privately to make arrangements for a speedy move, which he thought more than probable.

The telegram came about three days later, and then he and his niece set off at once for England, and reached Dover after a hurried journey, dreading to find their worst fears realized. But Percy Wyndham was still alive and in full possession of his faculties. He had weathered this second attack, but the physician judged from his pulse that the enemy had not been subdued, although he had used very stringent measures, so stringent that it was pretty clear that the system would not hold up if they had to be repeated. Under these circumstances, Mrs. Wyndham well knew that death was staring her husband in the face. It was a terrible time with her, poor woman ; and it needed all her fortitude, of which she had much, to bear up beneath the anguish which wrung her soul. It was not the loss of him alone—that was hard enough to bear—but his soul, his poor soul ! He was going, the husband and companion of her life, whom she had so loved ; and whither was he going ? She knew that for years he had not even made his Easter communion ; and he had lived in habitual disregard of the precepts of the Church. He had never been a scoffer, however, and his wife, so far as she could judge, did not think that he had lost his faith. Percy Wyndham, as we have seen, was a man who never liked to be bothered. Mrs. Wyndham accordingly, while attending to her own religious duties, which she had not neglected although her life had been tepid and worldly, had never obtruded the distasteful subject on her husband. She knew that he would not bear much, and, truth to say, her own

zeal had not been very ardent. Things would come right, she hoped. But now it was different. Death was at hand, and things had not come right. At all times this would have furnished matter of painful solicitude to her, but of late her own religious impressions had been deepened, and she realized more fully her husband's awful position. She must do something ; so she broached the subject cautiously, and suggested the sending for a priest : it would be a comfort to him, she said. But Percy answered sharply that it would be none ; he only wanted to be let alone, and he should get better. So Beatrice's mouth was closed. In fact she had no influence with him in religious matters. Percy Wyndham loved and sincerely respected his wife. He had always thought much of her judgment, and had consulted her invariably in all family matters of importance ; keeping nothing from her, except that unfortunate debt, and that as much to spare her pain and annoyance as from any other motive. But the influence which persons exercise is of a personal kind. It depends more on what they *are* than on aught else. Now Mrs. Wyndham was a sincere Catholic certainly, and attended with outward decency to her duties, but she could not be said to be a good Catholic. She was cold in religious matters, and immersed in worldly interests. Wyndham thought it natural and becoming in women that they should pay a certain respect to religion ; and it can scarcely be surprising that he did not believe that his wife's devotion was anything more than a piece of external decorum. It was, at any rate, not sufficiently real or practical to give her a right to preach to him ; and Beatrice never preached to him. The first time she tried her hand he speedily silenced her, as we have just seen.

The only hope that remained was in what Sanders might effect. Percy esteemed his brother-in-law, and knew he was a true and fervent Christian ; words with him had realities

at their back. Perhaps he might hearken to *him*, on this account alone ; and it could only be on this account. Sanders was not likely to speak with more tact than his sister ; on the contrary, he would, no doubt, speak with much less. He had no eloquence, and would probably adduce nothing beyond some simple argument which Wyndham had often heard in the course of his life, and had heard unmoved. Sanders, however, lost no time—there was no time to be lost—in speaking to his brother-in-law on the great affair of his soul. It was no easy task he undertook. He had succeeded in five minutes in persuading Wyndham to forgive Emma, but then his natural indolence came in to aid Sanders's arguments ; it was less trouble to him to forgive than to be obdurate ; it was otherwise now : he had to obtain his own forgiveness from God, and this necessitated a certain effort, to say no more. Sanders got no further the first time he spoke than the extracting an express acknowledgment from his brother-in-law that he was still a believer. He had not lost his faith ; he knew he had neglected his duties ; when he was recovered from this attack he would set things in order. At present he wished to hear no more of the matter ; it made him nervous.

Sanders paid no attention to this hint, but returned to the charge the next day, when his brother-in-law got angry, and said that he wearied him. The good man then went off to the priest to have a Mass said for his unhappy relative, and stirred up his sister and his nieces to pray with redoubled fervour. "Have a little faith and hope," he said ; "you have not half hope enough ; you will get nothing that way." Then he pulled out his big rosary, and went plump down on his knees that very instant to say a decade with them in order to obtain that the dying man should consent to see a priest. The difficulty was to bring home to Percy's mind that he *was* dying. He clung to life. To make his confession seemed a preparation for death. It was

like having a glimpse of his coffin, and he recoiled from the very idea.

The next morning, as soon as Wyndham was able to receive him, Sanders paid him his usual visit. He had heard but an indifferent report of the patient from his sister. "Well, how are you this morning?" he asked, as he seated himself by the bed-side.

"Bad, very bad, Sanders. Do you know," he added, his voice having a nervous falter in it, "I have a notion I am dying; what do you think? Tell me the truth; I know you always do tell the truth."

"Well, Percy, I do not think you have very long to live; that is my impression."

"And what does Barton say about me? Have you spoken to him yourself?"

"Yes, I have. I begged him yesterday to give me his opinion without reserve. I did not wish to hear what he hoped—we all hoped, of course—but what he really thought. And what he said amounted to this: he considered that you could not stand another stroke, and he was not satisfied, judging from your pulse and other symptoms, that another was not impending. Here is the doubt, and here is the hope: perhaps you will escape another; it is possible. He don't know; no more do I; no more does anybody. In some matters the doctors are just as much in the dark as the most ignorant of us. But one thing is quite clear, Wyndham. The next stroke, if God sends one, may deprive you of the power of using your faculties or your speech; at present you have both, and can make the most profitable use you ever made of them in your life. Your danger is so imminent as to make delay about the greatest piece of folly a man could commit; yet, as your state is not altogether hopeless, you would still be able to feel some confidence that your act was free and meritorious, and not the mere impulse of fear, a mere clutching at Heaven as a last

resource, because you know that earth is slipping irretrievably away. Come, Percy, let me go for the priest."

"I will think about it," said Wyndham after a pause.

The entrance of Mrs. Wyndham and the physician now cut short the conversation, to Sanders's considerable annoyance; indeed, he felt almost impatient at the inopportune arrival, but a second thought, as he stumped along the passage, restored the good man's equanimity. "What a fool I am!" he muttered, so he betook himself to his room, and was down on his knees in a minute with the big rosary in his hands once more. He had scarcely finished a decade before a thought appeared to strike him, and, taking his hat, he hurried off in the direction of the Catholic chapel. The idea which had struck him was to bring back the priest with him, and then catch a favourable moment to obtain Wyndham's consent to see him. He fancied that he would not refuse if he knew him to be in the house.

To cut the matter short, Sanders succeeded in his object. It would have been difficult to stir up Wyndham to take the active step of sending for a priest; but it was far easier to prevail on him not to refuse to see him when he was informed that he was actually within his doors. He grumbled, and said Sanders had been officious, but added, "Of course I must just see him as you have brought him; it would be discourteous not to do so, but I don't know much that he can do for me; I should have wished to prepare my mind first." So Wyndham did see the priest, and, after that, all went smoothly. He made his confession, and received all the sacraments of the dying, while yet in full possession of his faculties, and if he did not manifest those unmistakable proofs of penitence with which returning sinners so often gladden the hearts which love them, allowance must be made for the undemonstrative nature of the man. The priest was satisfied, and Sanders, too, was satisfied when Percy, grasping his hand, said, "John, you

have been my greatest benefactor. You saved my daughter from misery and disgrace ; then you saved me from the sin of withholding my forgiveness ; and now you have saved me from dying myself unforgiven. God bless and reward you !”

Two days more had scarcely elapsed before the dreaded stroke came, and the sick man never regained his consciousness. He died, and little now is left for me to tell. Sanders remained for a fortnight with his poor bereaved sister, to console her and help her to transact the necessary business which devolved upon her. This being accomplished, he persuaded her to accompany him to Sicily. He found no great difficulty, for Beatrice, who had learned her brother's worth, clung to him now in the days of her affliction as her only prop and support.

The reader will perhaps wish to know what were Emma Wyndham's subsequent fortunes in life. She was married a year later to a Sicilian Count. He was not very remarkable for either good looks or abilities ; in fact, he was an ordinary sort of man, but he was very good-tempered, and full of vivacity ; and, what was better still, he was a good Catholic. Emma was satisfied with him, and he was more than satisfied with Emma ; he was, moreover, extremely well pleased with his mother-in-law, and glad that she should make his house her home. So the three lived together, to their mutual content, Mrs. Wyndham only visiting England occasionally to see her son Algernon, now married to the rich widow, and well-to-do as far as this world is concerned.

Gertrude's home was with her uncle. Teresa's restored strength enabled her about that time to seek entrance into religion. She joined the Dominicans, and her father, after giving a suitable dowry, adopted Gertrude as his daughter and heiress. Gertrude had no desire to marry, indeed her uncle was all in all to her ; so it is more than probable

that he will not lose her, but that she will remain with him to be the solace of his declining years.

Does the reader feel any curiosity concerning the future of an individual who has figured prominently in these pages—Emma's quondam lover? A few days before her marriage, as she was looking over *Galignani's Messenger*, a paragraph caught her eye which brought the blood to her cheeks,—Lady Selden had eloped with Captain Baines. Could it be true? Kate Selden, whose love of the world and calculating appreciation of all the material advantages which it had to offer to one in her position, would seem, in default of good principles, to have secured her from an act so inimical to all her interests! Yet it was true. It does not enter into my plan to relate how this came about. Such things do come about sometimes; and persons who lack good principles and the love of virtue are led on step by step to commit suicidal acts from which sheer selfishness, it might be supposed, would have preserved them. I believe that a certain Rachel Somers, with whom the reader is also acquainted, took an active share in this disgraceful business. Emma at once shuddered and rejoiced as she read.

It remains now only to give a glance at the Héricourt family. Anne, of course, was married to Eustace Rochfort, and we need not say that this union was a most happy one. At the age of eighteen her sister Pauline became the wife of a French Baron, whose *terre* adjoined that of Héricourt. He was considerably (though not to a disproportionate degree) her senior. Pauline did not mind this; nay, she thought it a compliment that she should be singled out by a sensible, clever man of thirty-six; and, no doubt, it was much better that she should marry one to whom she was sure to look up with a certain deference. Pauline was very well disposed in every way, but a steady partner in life was a necessity in her case. Nothing would have made

Anne giddy, but Pauline with a giddy husband might, and probably would, have been giddy too. The Baron was not giddy, and was an excellent man in every way. He had the prudence, too, not to allow his young wife the opportunity of replacing "the simple tastes of her childhood with the baubles and frivolities of a later age." Accordingly he avoided Paris as a residence, and lived on his estate. Pauline made an admirable *dame du château* as she grew older, without, I believe, ever losing her partiality for the feline race, which she was able to indulge without opposition on the part of her complaisant husband, whose pleasure it was to gratify all her harmless tastes while encouraging her in the practice of those works of charity which are the special sphere of a Christian woman. Madame d'Héricourt saw the fruit of her labours in the happy marriages of her two children, and was blessed.

Has the reader failed to perceive the moral of my story? Should this be so, I will, in conclusion, point it out. The result of Madame d'Héricourt's system of education was the possession of a legitimate influence over her daughters, which, in spite of the temporary temptation which the eldest experienced, led her finally to a well-assorted union. That of Mrs. Wyndham resulted in the entire absence of all true maternal control, and would, as its natural fruit, have precipitated her ill-advised child into a fatal marriage had she not had the good fortune to have for her brother honest, though homely, John Sanders.

THE END.

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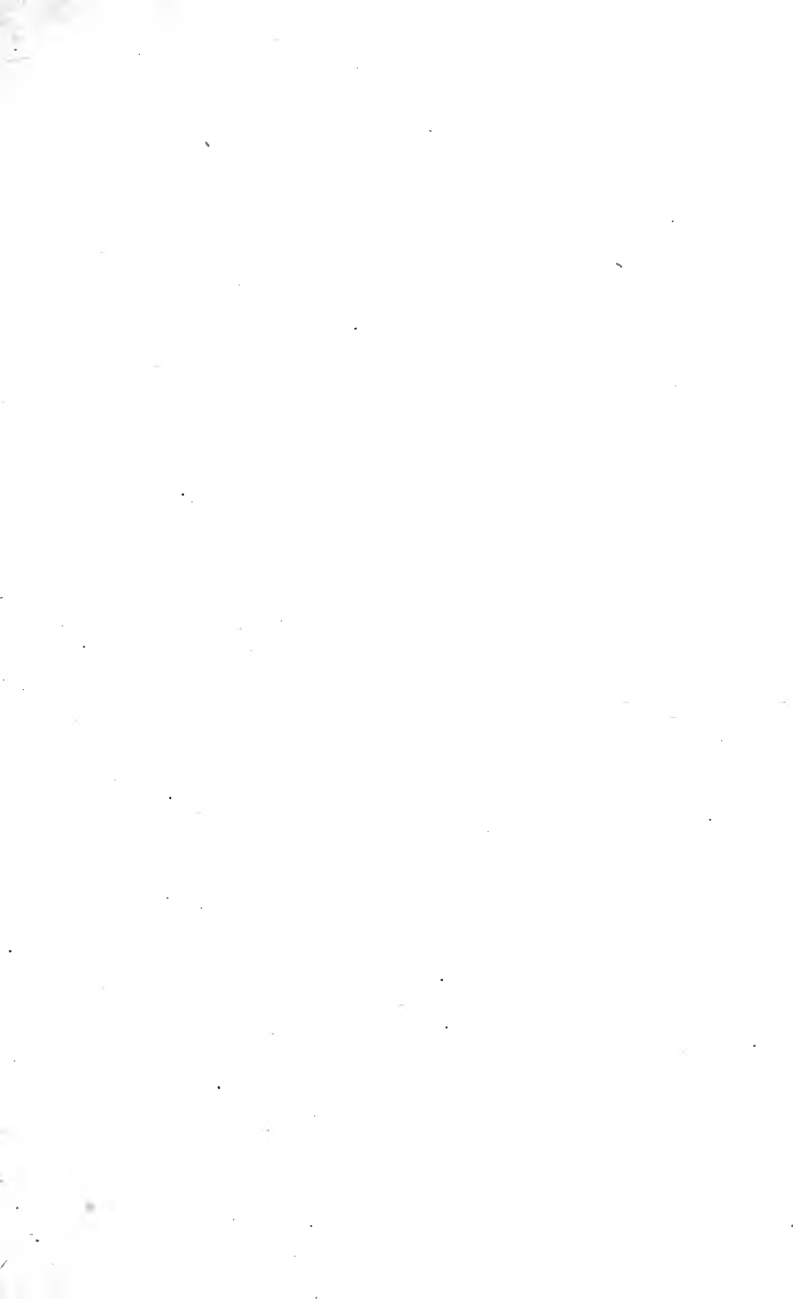
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